THE BUILDING OF A NATION

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DAVID POURING WATER ON THE GROUND.

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Building of a Nation

PART I

By

Mary Kidpath Mann

PART II

By

May Engstrom Hoss

VOLUME IV

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NEW LIGHT ON THE OLD TESTAMENT

BY

PROF. A. H. SAYCE.

Many of us are apt to regard the Bible, and more especially the Old Testament, much as we regard a fairy-tale, as something belonging to a different world from our own, with no more reality than a world of dreams. It is difficult to think of Abraham or David as men of flesh and blood like ourselves, or as acting and speaking like the men of today. The Bible seems to stand apart by itself without any relation to other books and other histories; it is not only that it relates to another age and another country, but we have been accustomed to look upon it as standing quite alone.

It is true that in one respect the Old Testament does stand alone. Nowhere else in ancient literature can we find the same exalted idea of God, of our dependence upon Him, and of His unchangeable righteousness. Nowhere else do we meet with the same clear pronouncement that there is but one God who has created all things and who requires from His worshipers righteousness of life and thought. But besides the spiritual side of the Old Testament, there is also an historical side. It traces for us the history of the Hebrew people from the days when their fore-

fathers migrated to Canaan down to the time when their national sins were punished by captivity in a strange land from which by God's mercy they were again delivered. And in the course of this history they were brought into contact with the surrounding nations and the great empires of the ancient East. Until recently the history of these nations and empires was a sealed book and had been lost, and it seemed as if it could never be recovered again. A little was known about it from the writers of Greece and Rome, but it was a little only, and much of that little was clearly fabulous. Most of what we know was derived from the Bible itself, and its truthfulness depended on the Old Testament record.

It was not surprising, therefore, that the Old Testament should have come to be regarded as something which stood solitary and alone like some isolated mountain peak. But it stands solitary and alone no longer. Thanks to excavation and the decipherment of the lost and forgotten languages and writings of the old Oriental world, we have become intimately acquainted with the ages, both of Abraham and of Moses, and with the peoples and monarchies of whom the Old Testament writers speak. The monuments of Egypt have revealed to us the daily life and beliefs of its former inhabitants; the letters written by Amraphel, king of Shinar, who helped to carry Lot into captivity, are now in our possession; and we can read Sennacherib's own account of his campaign against Hezekiah. The discoveries made of late years in Eastern lands, while they confirm the Biblical narrative on the one side, throw light upon it on the other.

Palestine, where the Israelites lived, lay between the two great empires of the ancient world, Egypt and Babylonia. Babylonia was for a time supplanted by Assyria, while for a time another great empire, that of the Hittites, existed to the north. The road from one of these empires to the other passed through Palestine, which thus became the meeting-place and battle-ground of the civilized nations of the East. Whether they would or not, the inhabitants of Palestine were forced to interest themselves in the doings of their neighbors, and the policy adopted at the Assyrian or Egyptian courts was often of vital importance for them. In the days of Abraham, Canaan was a Babylonian province, so that in migrating to it from Babylonia he was merely migrating from one part of the Babylonian empire to another; in the century or two that preceded the birth of Moses it had passed into the hands of the Egyptians. In later days the politicians of Judah tried to play off Egypt against Assyria, and endeavored to defend themselves from Assyrian attack by alliance with the Egyptian Pharaohs.

The oldest geographical table that exists is to be found in the tenth chapter of Genesis. Here all the civilized nations and tribes known at the time are enumerated and classified. A large part of the world, it is true, was not known to the compiler of the table; there is no reference in it to America or China or India. Moreover, only the civilized nations and tribes are mentioned; the negroes were known, but they were uncivilized and are consequently not included in the list. Africa is represented by the civilized tribes

of Cush or Ethiopia, and Phut or Libya. The world of civilization is divided into three zones; in the North were the descendants of Japhet, in the centre the descendants of Shem, while the southern zone was occupied by the descendants of Ham.

Abraham, the ancestor of the Israelites, was himself born in a Babylonian city, "Ur of the Chaldees." The ruins of the city have been discovered, as well as of a great temple dedicated to the Moon which stood in the middle of it. Not very long before the birth of Abraham it had been the capital of Babylonia, and we now have multitudes of written clay tablets, which took the place of our books and writing paper, which were written at the time. Many of them are receipts for payment, others relate to law-suits or the letting of houses and the sale of land; others, again, contain religious hymns or mathematical calculations. We learn from them that there were many individuals belonging to the same race as Abraham who were settled in Ur and in other Babylonian cities, principally for the sake of trade, and that journeys to Canaan for commercial or official reasons were by no means infrequent. The name of Abraham or Abram itself has been found in one of these clay documents, though the person who bore it did not inhabit the same part of Babylonia as the Hebrew patriarch.

After Abraham had migrated to Canaan we are told in the 14th chapter of Genesis that the king of Elam with three other princes, one of whom was Amraphel, king of Shinar or northern Babylonia, made a campaign in Palestine in order to put down a rebellion there. Elam was on the eastern side of

Babylonia and the Babylonian inscriptions have informed us that Babylonia was at this time subject to it. Afterwards, however, Amraphel succeeded in shaking off the foreign yoke. He was one of the greatest of the Babylonian monarchs, and ordered a code of laws to be drawn up, a copy of which is now at Paris. This code was compiled more than seven centuries before the code of Moses. Perhaps the most interesting remains that have been left us by Amraphel are his letters which show that, like other busy men, he found time for everything. Some of the letters are about state politics, but there are others which order investigations to be made into cases of bribery and oppression and the dismissal of judges or governors who had been convicted of taking bribes. Other letters, again, relate to the cultivation of the crown lands or the digging of canals, and make it clear that the Babylonian king was a good farmer as well as a great warrior and a skillful administrator.

The history of Jacob and Joseph takes us to Egypt and gives us a picture of the Egyptian people and their country which modern discovery has shown to be true to life. To the Israelites the Egyptian king was known as Pharaoh, a word which properly means "Great House," but was used as a title of respect by the foreigners settled in the country to denote the Master of the Great House. The seven years' famine was unfortunately an event which has happened more than once in Egyptian history and would have happened again within the last ten years had it not been for the railways which carried foreign food rapidly and cheaply all over the country and the great works

of irrigation which have lately been constructed on the Nile.

The conquest of Canaan brought the Israelites into contact with a strange, new set of peoples, Philistines, Moabites, Syrians, and the like. The Philistines, like the Israelites, had come from abroad and taken possession of what had once been Canaanite territory. Recent discoveries in Crete make it probable that that island had been their original home, and that the magnificent palaces which have recently been excavated there were the residences of their old kings. The Syrians occupied the country immediately to the north of Palestine and must be distinguished from the Assyrians who adjoined Babylonia and took their name from Asshur.

Assyria was a military kingdom; the king was the commander of a standing army, which in both armament and discipline was far in advance of any other army in the ancient world. This will explain why the Assyrian invasions were so much feared, and why all Western Asia was eventually swallowed up in the Assyrian empire. Isaiah paints in vivid colors the resistless might of the Assyrian army, and the discoveries made in Assyria have shown how true his description is to the facts. What made Assyria the more formidable was that its very existence depended on a continuous career of conquest. The army needed occupation and demanded booty; while the merchants of Nineveh, in their desire to absorb all the trade of the world, encouraged the warlike proclivities of the nation. For a time Jerusalem was saved from destruction at the hands of Sennacherib, partly by the

advance into Judah of the Ethiopian king of Egypt, with whom Hezekiah had made alliance, partly by the plague which carried off a very large part of the Assyrian Army; but the respite was not for long; and we find Manasseh, the son of Hezekiah, a tributary subject of the Assyrian king. And when the place of Assyria was taken by the Babylonian empire of Nebuchadnezzar, Jerusalem and its glorious temple were leveled to the ground.

With the overthrow of this later Babylonian empire by Cyrus, the Persian, a new power and a new people appeared upon the scene. With this new power the history of the Jews is closely intertwined. It was Cyrus who permitted them to return from their captivity in Babylonia, to rebuild the temple and restore the Jewish religion and ritual in their old home. An inscription of Cyrus has been discovered in which he refers to the event.

One of the most striking examples of the way in which the Bible makes us acquainted with the history of an otherwise forgotten people is its references to the Hittites. The Hittites settled at Hebron sold to Abraham the cave of Machpelah, and in the list of the inhabitants of Canaan before the Israelites conquered it, the Hittites occupy a prominent place. Outside the pages of the Old Testament, however, the Hittites were so completely forgotten that the mention of them has actually been made a reason for doubting the truth of the passages in which it occurs. Now, however, excavation has shown that the Hittites were one of the most important nations of the ancient East. The empire of the Hittites once extended over

a large part of Western Asia; the fall of the earlier Babylonian empire was in a great measure due to them; and they drove the Egyptians out of Palestine. In the age of the Exodus they were the chief power in Canaan. If we want to know something about the tribes and peoples of the ancient Oriental world it is still to the Old Testament that we have in the first instance to look.

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Oxford, England.

THE BUILDING OF A NATION

THE FIRST STORY

THE STRONG MAN AND THE PROPHET

LONG time ago, many years before David reigned over Israel or his son Solomon builded the temple at Jerusalem, two little boys were born in Canaan. The story of these boys is much alike in some ways, but how very unlike in others! They did not live at the same time, but the circumstances which surrounded their birth were similar. Each boy's mother had grieved because she had no children, and each had long prayed to God to give her a son. At last the prayers of both were answered. The little boys were born, and one was Samson who afterward became the Strong Man, and the other was Samuel who became the Prophet.

Perhaps you already know the story of the childhood of Samson and Samuel. The mother of each took for her son the Nazarite vow at the time of his birth. This word Nazarite means set apart, therefore consecrated, and he who makes the vow, through all his life, must conduct himself in such manner as to bring no disgrace or dishonor upon himself.

Now, Canaan was a great agricultural country, and the Canaanites made large quantities of wine from the grapes which grew so abundantly in the vineyards. When you are older and can look deeply into the history of the nations, you will learn that those countries which possess the great vineyards, where the people make and drink the wine to excess, have been the first to lose their moral strength and national influence. To abstain from wine was a part of the Nazarite vow,—to eat clean food, to do clean deeds, and above all else, to have clean thoughts. Finally, because the body also was consecrated to the service of the Lord, the hair must not be cut nor the beard shaved. Do not forget this fact. The Lord gave Samson his strength, but when his hair was cut, it departed from him.

So, as I have already told you, while the circumstances which surrounded the childhood of these boys were similar, the boys themselves were very different. Samson grew up in the home of his parents, a strong, clean, healthy boy, and spent most of his youth in doing things which called for great physical strength. A boy always likes to show his muscle. Samson could lift a heavy weight, run a long distance, throw farther than any of his companions and do all those things which show skill and courage and athletic force. Samuel, just as soon as he was old enough to leave his mother, which was when he was three years old, was placed in the care of Eli, the priest, and grew up amidst the quiet surroundings of the Tabernacle at Shiloh.

The years went by, and each of the boys grew to

manhood, and one day in the late summer when the corn was ripe in the fields and the grapes were purple in the vineyards, Samson started on a journey into the land of the Philistines. He had been there before, and when on a former visit had seen a young girl who pleased him well and whom he wished to have for his wife. His mother was greatly troubled and said to her son:

"Are there not girls enough among your own people, that you must seek a wife from among the Philistines?"

You see, she could not know that Samson's marriage to the Philistine woman was a part of the great plan of the Lord that Samuel should seek an opportunity to conquer the Philistines. So her son answered only:

"She pleases me. I would have her for my wife."

So, though the father and mother grieved, they were silent, and Samson went his way into the land of the Philistines.

On this particular morning, as he walked along through the fields singing to himself, suddenly he heard a dreadful roar, and a huge lion with tawny mane and wide-open jaws sprang out of the woods upon him. What was he to do? He had no weapons —only his hands. But he was not afraid. He seized the lion by its open jaws, tore them apart, threw the dead beast upon the ground and went his way. It did not seem to Samson any great thing to kill a lion. He did not even tell anyone about it. But after the young woman had promised to be his wife, and Samson was returning home, he saw that a swarm of bees

had settled in the body of the dead lion and had made honey. He gathered up the honey and ate of it.

It was the custom in those days for the bridegroom to give the wedding feast, so in a few days Samson went back to Timnah to marry the young Philistine woman. And when the feast had been prepared, he selected thirty of the guests and said:

"I will give you a riddle. If you can give me the correct answer before the seven days of the feast are over, I will give you thirty fine linen wrappers and thirty festal garments."

"But," said the guests, "what if we can not answer?"

"Then you shall give me thirty fine linen wrappers and thirty festal garments," replied Samson. And they said:

"Put forth your riddle that we may learn it."

Then Samson said:

"Out of the eater came something to eat;
Out of the strong came something sweet."

Now, it would not seem that the giving of a riddle at a wedding feast was a matter of any great importance, would it? But such was the case this time, for this very little thing was the beginning of the struggle between Samson and the Philistines. When they had thought and pondered over the riddle for six days, the guests went to Samson's wife and said:

"Persuade your husband to solve the riddle for you. Then do you tell it to us. If you do not, we will burn you and your father's house with fire."

So the young wife wept and wept, and finally on the seventh day, in order to stop her tears, her husband told her the answer, and she told the thirty guests.

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SAMSON AND THE LION.

So when it was sunset on the seventh day, at which time the answer was to be given, the guests said to Samson:

"What is sweeter than honey? And what is stronger than a lion?"

Then Samson knew that his wife had betrayed him. He went down to Ashkelon, killed thirty of the Philistines, took their festal garments, and gave them to the thirty guests who had answered the riddle. Then, filled with anger, he went back to his own home, leaving his wife at her father's house. When he returned, a few days later, he found that his wife's father, thinking that he would not come back, had given her to another man. When Samson learned this, he swore vengeance. He caught three hundred foxes, tied their tails together, two by two, and between each pair of tails he placed a lighted torch. Then he turned them loose into the standing grain of the Philistines. The poor foxes, frightened by the fire and maddened by the pain, dashed here and there and everywhere until all the grain, both what was standing and what had been shocked, was utterly destroyed. It was a cruel thing to do, but those were cruel times. They were not like our times. Men were not governed in those days by the same principles under which we try to live.

When the Philistines saw this great destruction, they cried out:

"Who has done this thing?"

"Samson the son-in-law of the Timnite, who took away his wife and gave her to his friend," was the reply.

Then the Philistines went themselves and burned Samson's wife and her father in her father's house, and when Samson heard of it, he said:

"This time I shall be to blame if I do not do injury to the Philistines."

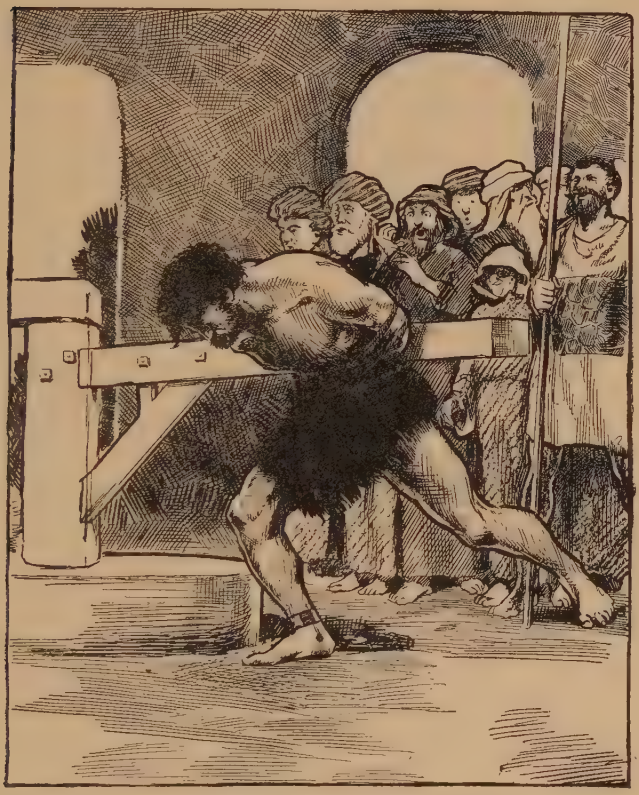
From this time on he never ceased to make war upon them. He became a judge and ruled over the people for twenty years, but late in his life, he fell in love with a woman named Delilah. She did not love him, but she made him believe that she did and beguiled him into telling her that his great strength lay in his hair which, according to his Nazarite vow, had never been cut. So, that night, while he slept, she had her servants cut his hair, and when next the Philistines fell upon him, he found himself weaker than the weakest of them. They bound him with chains, put out his eyes and threw him into prison where he was compelled to spend his days grinding corn for his captors.

Now he had time to repent the folly of breaking his vow. Blind, bound, a prisoner, grinding corn like a slave, he began to think, to be sorry for his sins, to repent of his foolish confidence in himself. While he was in prison his hair grew again and his strength returned, but alas, his sight was gone forever. And one day the Philistines gathered together to offer a great sacrifice to their god Dagon who (as they believed) had delivered Samson their enemy into their hands. And while they made merry, Samson was brought forth from the prison that they might make sport of him. And Samson said to the lad who had led him forth:

"Let me feel the pillars whereon the house standeth that I may lean upon them."

Then Samson made a prayer unto the Lord:

"O Lord God," he cried, "remember me, I pray



They Bound Him with Chains, Put Out His Eyes, and Compelled Him to Grind Corn in the Prison.

thee, strengthen me, I pray thee, only this once, that I may be avenged of the Philistines for the loss of my eyes."

Then he took hold of the pillars of the temple with

his two hands and pushed with all his might. It fell and although Samson was killed, yet the number of Philistines he slew on the day of his death was greater than all he had slain during his life.

But what of Samuel, the other little boy whose mother had made for him the Nazarite vow? When he was a little fellow only about twelve years old the Tabernacle at Shiloh was destroyed. The Ark of the Lord was taken, and the twenty years that followed were sorrowful years in the history of Israel. The people gave themselves up to despair. Because they were oppressed by the Philistines and were visited by famine and disease, and because the Ark had been captured, they believed that the Lord had forsaken them and they sought relief in the worship of false gods. These things grieved Samuel very much, and he determined that when he became a man he would try to change all this. So when he was grown, he gathered the people together at Mizpah, told them to repent, and prayed to the Lord to forgive them. When the Philistines learned of this gathering, they fell upon them, but the Lord once more aided Israel and the people fought with greater courage than ever before because they believed that God was once more amongst His people.

Then Samuel also became a judge. A judge in those days was not like the judges of our time. He was more of a ruler. Samuel restored order among his people. He established law, and above all else, he kindled a new religious enthusiasm in Israel. He also was a judge for twenty years.

Up to this time, there had been no king in Israel.

Every man did that which was right in his own eyes. A country where there is no king, no emperor, no president, no ruler of any kind, would seem to us a strange sort of government, wouldn't it? Finally, the people of Israel were no longer satisfied with this state of affairs, so they went to Samuel and demanded a king.

Now, Samuel had sons, but they were like the sons of Eli. They were not good men. The people were not willing to have either of them for their king. Perhaps Samuel felt, after all he had done for Israel, that they were ungrateful to want a king at all. But the Lord spoke once more to Samuel, saying:

"Make them a king."

Samuel obeyed without murmuring. Did not the Lord know that to gather together the roving tribes of Israel and make them into a nation would be a difficult thing to do, and that by giving advice to the new king, Samuel could do more good for his people than if he were king himself? And this was why it came to pass that Samuel crowned two kings. The first was Saul who reigned over Israel many years, and the second was David who was once a little shepherd lad in Bethlehem. Samuel lived to be an old, old man. Everybody loved and honored him. We are told that when he died, all Israel gathered together and lamented him.

Can you not see for yourself the difference between these two—Samson and Samuel? Samson's story is not without a moral for us all. It shows how the strongest man oftentimes becomes the weakest, and that physical strength can not be compared with

strength of character. His bodily strength and his wit made him popular with his associates, but his wars against the Philistines were private quarrels and he never once put forth his great strength for the deliverance of his people. Samuel labored all his life for the good of Israel. He was the last of the old judges. He founded the School of the Prophets. He laid the foundation for the United Kingdom of Israel. The hardest thing in the world to do is to stand between an old system of government and a new one, but this is what Samuel did successfully. Samson is a fine example of a man who possesses great gifts within himself but who fails to consecrate them to a noble cause. Samuel stands out in history, a sublime figure, a man who was faithful, patient, honest, and unselfish to the end of his long life.

QUESTIONS

Who were the two boys whose stories were much alike?

Where were they born?

What was the first boy called after he became a man?

What was he noted for in his youth?

What was the vow called which each mother took for her son at the time of his birth?

What did this vow require of those who took it?

To what country did the first boy go in search of a wife?

What happened as he was on his way there?

What was the riddle which he gave to his guests at the wedding feast?

How did they learn the answer

Whom did Samson marry later in life?

How was he punished for breaking his vow?

How and where did he die?

Where did the second boy grow up?

What did he do during his youth?

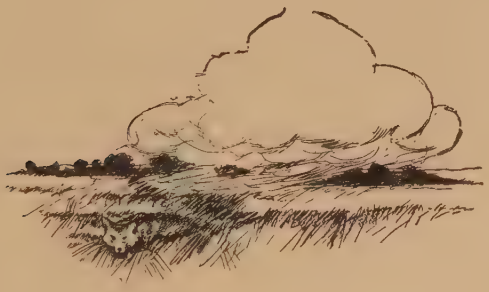
After he became a man what was he called?

How many kings did he crown and who were they?

What were some of the other things he did for the people of Israel?

Why was he a greater man than a king?

What should we learn from the stories of these two boys?



THE SECOND STORY

THE SONS OF ELI

ELI, the priest at the Tabernacle of Shiloh, had become an old man. One day he sat on a seat by the door of the Temple and thought of many things. He was looking back over his long life, as old people are apt to do, and he was thinking of a day, now long ago, when he had looked out of the door of the Temple and had seen a woman coming toward him, leading a little boy by the hand. And when she had come up to him she said: "This is the child for whom I prayed. As long as he liveth, I will lend him to the Lord." How long ago that seemed now!

Then he remembered also that the little boy had once awakened in the night, thinking he had heard Eli calling him. But he had not called him. A second time he wakened and a third time. And when he had come for the third time to Eli, the old priest knew that the voice the child heard was the voice of the Lord, and he had told Samuel (for it was he) that if he heard the voice again, he should answer and say:

"Speak, Lord; thy servant heareth."

Samuel had done as he was told, for he was a good, obedient boy, and when the voice came again, he made answer as Eli had told him he should.

Then the Lord had revealed to this child the punishment which was to come upon Eli and his two sons because of their sins. He said to Samuel:

"Behold, I will do a thing in Israel at which the ears of every one that heareth it shall tingle. I will judge the house of Eli forever because his sons made themselves vile and he restrained them not. I will do all that I have spoken concerning his house from beginning to end."

When the voice of the Lord was heard no more, Samuel lay down again and tried to sleep. Although he was but a child, he was very sorrowful, for he loved the old priest who had been kind to him always and he did not want to tell him what the Lord had revealed to him. But Eli said:

"Samuel, my son, what is this thing which the Lord hath spoken unto you? I pray thee hide it not from me."

Samuel told him all, and Eli answered:

"It is the Lord. He will do what seemeth good."

So, as Eli sat by the Temple door on this day, he could not help thinking of Samuel and of his own two sons, Hophni and Phineas, who all their lives had been disobedient and unruly and who finally grew up into wicked men. He thought it a little strange that Samuel had grown up and played with these boys without becoming a bad boy himself. But Samuel had always done what was right and each year, when his father and mother had come to the Temple to pray, they

thought that the Lord had rewarded them because they had lent unto Him their son.

Then Eli remembered all the evil things his own unworthy sons had done. They also were priests, and Samuel had been an eye-witness to the way in which they had disgraced their priestly offices. They were guilty of all sorts of crimes. They stole the gifts and the flesh of the animals which the people brought to offer in sacrifices to the Lord. They forced the people to pay them for their priestly services and did other vile and wicked things. And Eli himself, in a way, was no less guilty than they, for while in other respects he had led a good life, he had permitted Hophni and Phineas to continue to be priests after he knew of their wickedness and crimes. Now he knew, for the Lord had told it unto Samuel, that he would be punished no less than his sons, and he knew also, in his heart, that he deserved it.

Not long after Eli had learned what the Lord had spoken unto Samuel, the Philistines had assembled to make war upon Israel. There was a great battle, and four thousand of the soldiers of Israel were slain. When the battle was over and the people of Israel saw how great had been the slaughter, they cried out:

"Wherefore hath the Lord smitten us today before the Philistines? Let us fetch the Ark of the Covenant of the Lord out of Shiloh unto us, that it may save us out of the hands of our enemies."

So the people sent over to Shiloh and brought the Ark, and among those who went were Hophni and Phineas, the two evil sons of Eli, the priest.

Do you know what the Ark of the Covenant was?

Well, you may remember that long years before, when the Lord had spoken unto Moses, He had said:

"Let the Children of Israel bring me an offering, and every man shall give willingly that which is in his heart to give. Let them make me a sanctuary that I may dwell among them."

Then the Lord had told Moses how the sanctuary should be built, and that they should place in it the Ark of the Covenant. And Moses had told the people how the Ark should be made, of fine wood, overlaid with gold, both inside and out, two and a half cubits long, two and a half cubits wide, two and a half cubits high. And on either side should be a ring of the beaten gold through which a stave or pole could be passed, by means of which the Ark could be moved from place to place. And the Lord had also said unto Moses:

"Wherever the Ark of the Covenant goes, there will I commune with thee, there will I give my commandments to the Children of Israel."

You may remember also that after Moses was dead, the Lord spoke unto Joshua, the son of one of Moses' ministers, and said:

"As I was with Moses, so will I be with thee."

Then he told Joshua that he would give the Children of Israel a land which should be all their own, and commanded Joshua that he should lead the people forth to this land. Joshua obeyed. He told the priests to take the Ark of the Covenant and go before the people. When they came to the banks of the Jordan, the river had overflowed its banks, but the feet of them that bore the Ark had no sooner touched the

waters than they parted into two great walls, and the people passed over on the dry land.

So it was as the Lord had spoken. Wherever the Ark of the Covenant went, the people prospered, for the Lord kept watch over Israel. For a long time now, the Ark had been kept safely in the Tabernacle at Shiloh where Eli, the priest, kept watch over it. When the soldiers of Israel, after the great battle with the Philistines, had returned from Shiloh, bringing the Ark into camp, the people shouted till the whole earth seemed to resound with the noise. The Philistines, in their camp across the hill, heard the rejoicing, and sent out spies to learn the cause of it. When they found that the people were shouting because the Ark of the Lord had been brought into camp, they were afraid. They said to each other:

"Woe unto us! The Lord is come into their camp. Woe unto us! And who shall now deliver us? There hath not been such a thing before. Be strong, O ye Philistines! Fight, that ye may not become the servants of Israel, as they have been to you!"

So they went into battle, and again there was great slaughter. Israel was defeated. They fled every man to his tent. Thirty thousand were slain. The Ark of the Lord was taken and it remained in the land of the Philistines for seven months. During these months, however, all sorts of misfortunes befell the Philistines. And they thought:

"Is it because we have taken the Ark of the Lord from Israel that all these things have befallen us?"

They called together the lords of the Philistines and said:

"What shall we do with the Ark of Israel?"

Some one answered: "Let us send it into Gath."

They took it there, but the hand of the Lord was heavy upon the city. Everywhere they took the Ark, the Lord sent punishment upon the people who had taken it. They took it to the temple of Dagon, their god, and set it up before him. But lo! when they arose early the next morning, the image of Dagon had fallen to the ground upon its face. They picked up the figure and set it again in its place, but on the next day the very same thing happened. Dagon lay again on his face on the ground before the Ark of the Lord, and the head and the hands of the figure of Dagon were broken off. Then the Philistines fled from the temple of Dagon and returned no more, and the people were visited with a terrible disease and with famine, and thousands died. Finally they called in their priests and said unto them:

"Tell us now what we can do to be saved from illness and hunger? Is it because we have brought the Ark of the Lord into our midst? Shall we send it back?"

And the priests said:

"Send it back, but send it not back empty. Prepare a new cart, and hitch to it two unbroken oxen. Place the Ark upon the cart, and put near it a coffer filled with jewels and gold and send it on its way. If it goeth of its own accord into the land of the Hebrews, then shall we know that it is because we took the Ark that we have been visited with all these evils. If not, then shall we know that they came about by chance."

The people did as the priests advised. They made

the cart, placed on it the Ark, filled the coffer with gold and jewels, hitched the oxen to the cart and sent it forth on its way. The oxen bore it straight to the borders of Beth-shemesh, and when they came to the place, the men were in the fields harvesting the wheat. They looked up and saw the Ark of the Covenant of the Lord coming toward them and great was their rejoicing. The oxen turned into a field owned by Joshua, a man of Beth-shemesh, in the centre of which was a great stone. Here the people assembled, removed the Ark, took from it the gold and jewels which the Philistines had sent with it, broke the cart in pieces, killed the oxen and made a burnt offering of all except the Ark to the Lord. Then the five men of the Philistines who had followed the Ark returned home and told the people what they had seen with their own eyes.

But in the meanwhile, on that day seven months before, when the people of Israel and the Philistines had come together in battle, and the Ark had been captured, Hophni and Phineas, the two sons of Eli, had been slain. And late in the evening of that day, when their old father sat watching by the Temple door, his heart trembling for the safety of the Ark, a man with earth upon his head and his clothes all torn, came running into Shiloh. When the people heard the news he brought, they broke into weeping and lamentation. Eli heard the sound and said:

"What meaneth all this noise and tumult?"

He was told that a messenger had come with news from the army, and he said unto the messenger:

"How went the battle, my son?"

The messenger looked at the poor, old man and felt very sorry for him. He knew that the news he brought would be a great blow to the old priest, for a man can not help loving his sons, even though they

"Come You from the Army, My Son? How Went the Battle?"

do evil things, and when their conduct is partly the father's fault, as it was in this case, the grief is still greater. Eli wished, as many another man has done, that he could live his life over again and do things

differently, but it was too late now. He was ninety-eight years old and the sight had gone out of his eyes. He could not see the messenger who stood before him, so he put out a withered, trembling hand to touch him. The messenger said:

"I am he that hath come out of the army. The Ark of the Covenant of the Lord is taken. Israel is fled before the Philistines. There hath been a great slaughter. Thy two sons, Hophni and Phineas, are among the dead."

The old man spoke no more after he heard the messenger's words. He tried to rise from his seat beside the Temple door, but he could not. He fell backward and his neck was broken, and thus he died.

Surely we should learn a lesson from the story of Eli. Every opportunity to do good was his, yet his sons made themselves vile and he restrained them not. The people did not mourn for Eli as they did for Samuel. He did not leave behind him the record of an honorable life, as Samuel did. Instead, when it came time for him to die, he was a sorrowful, grief-stricken, repentant old man, whose sin had found him out. On the night of Eli's death, the wife of Phineas gave birth to a little son, and she named him Ichabod, because this word means "the glory is departed from Israel." Then she, too, died, and in the death of Eli and his family, the Lord fulfilled that which he had revealed unto the child Samuel many years before.

QUESTIONS

What was the Ark of the Covenant?

By whom and for what purpose was it made?

Where had the Ark been kept for many years?

What was the name of the priest who watched over it?

What were the names of the priest's sons?

Were they good men?

What were some of the things they did?

What happened to Samuel as he lay sleeping one night?

When the war broke out with the Philistines what did Eli's sons do?

What happened to the Ark?

What happened to the Philistines after they carried the Ark away?

Did they return it? And in what way?

How old was Samuel when the Ark was captured?

How old was Eli?

What was he doing when the messenger came running with the news of the battle?

What did the messenger tell him?

How old was Eli when he died and what was the manner of his death?

Were there any members of his family left?

Were the things which the Lord had revealed to Samuel fulfilled?

Is there not a moral for us all in the story of Eli?

THE THIRD STORY

A JUDGE IN ISRAEL

THE real heroes of Israel's history were the judges. The children of Israel had wandered for forty years in the wilderness, but after the death of Moses, Joshua had led them into the Promised Land. This land was Canaan. They made war upon the wicked nations they found there but could not drive them from the land. So when they had conquered enough of the country, they settled down upon it with their foes all around them.

Now, Israel was not like any other nation. It was a nation of tribes. They had no king. God was the ruler of Israel and His will was made known to the people first by Moses and afterwards by others who were called prophets. This word means "Interpreter of God." We are told that every man did that which was right in his own eyes, but this does not mean that there was no rule of any kind in the land. It means that the head of the family, or the chief of the village or tribe was the one to be obeyed,—that it was not a national but a tribal government. But the Children of Israel were so oppressed by the foes which sur-

rounded them that they soon found that it was only by acting together that they could ever hope to overcome them. It was at this time that the judges began to rule.

While a judge in those days was not like our own judges, yet many of their duties were similar to those of our day. They had to settle the disputes of the people. Their word was law. Each tribe brought its quarrels to the judge and sometimes they were allowed to settle them by war or by some act of violence. The judges were obeyed by the whole nation, and perhaps it was because the people saw the benefit of having some one man to whom they could carry their troubles that they afterwards wanted a king to rule over Israel.

The first great leader in Israel was Joshua. He was not called a judge, although he was really one. Two things stand out boldly in the story of Joshua. Of course you remember what they are. One was the crossing of the Jordan, where the river divided into two great walls of water, and the people, with the men bearing the Ark at the head, went over on dry land. The other was the siege of Jericho, where Joshua led the hosts six times around the city, and on the seventh day shouted and blew the trumpet till the walls fell down. Although Joshua might well have been called a judge, he was really the successor of Moses, the great prophet.

I have already told you that the people of Israel had not been able to drive all their enemies from the land, and after the death of Joshua, they fell into very evil ways. They took the women of their enemies for

wives, and their daughters married their sons. Then some of the Children of Israel began to worship their false gods, and the Lord punished them by allowing their foes to make them slaves. But they repented and cried unto the Lord again in their distress. He heard them and sent men to lead them out to war and to make them free. These men were the judges.

One of the early judges was Ehud. He was left-handed. One time when the king of Moab had been making war upon them, Ehud hid his dagger in his robe and went to the king's house. And when he was admitted to the presence of the king, he said:

"I have a word from God to speak to thee, O king."

The king's attendants went away, and when they were alone, Ehud suddenly drew out his dagger and stabbed the king. Then he locked the doors and fled. The king's servants, seeing the doors closed, thought their master wished to be alone, so they did not go in. It was some time before they found him. In the meantime Ehud had gathered together his army in Canaan and led them forth against the Moabites. They had a great victory and the Children of Israel were free once more.

But it seems a strange thing that the people could forget all these things. No sooner would one leader spring up and set them free than they would fall again into sin. Once more the king of Canaan conquered them and made them slaves. This king's name was Jabin. He had his chariots made of iron so that it was impossible for an army of ordinary soldiers, who had to fight on foot, to make any headway against them. He had nine hundred of these chariots and the

life of the Children of Israel during his reign was most miserable. They dared not stay longer in their little villages or camps. They had to seek refuge in dens and caves. They had no weapons with which to fight. They became discouraged and lost faith.

The period which followed is one of the most interesting in the history of Israel. The judge who arose at that time to inspire the people and to lead them on to victory was a woman. She lived midway between Ramah and Bethel in Mount Ephraim, and her name was Deborah. She could no longer endure to witness the sorrows of her people. She felt that it would be better for them all to go forth to the struggle and perish than to remain as they were. So she persuaded Barak, a man of Galilee, to gather all the tribesmen together on Mount Tabor. Here, in a camp concealed by a forest of great oak trees, Barak gathered together and trained an army of ten thousand men. Fortune favored them. A sudden storm made the river rise and overflow its banks on which were camped Sisera, the king's captain, and his army. Barak fell upon them in their confusion and scattered them far and wide. Sisera fled to the tent of a friendly chieftain, but while he lay fast asleep and weary on the floor of the tent, Jael, the wife of the chief, killed him by driving a nail into his head. The power of the king of Canaan was completely broken by this disaster, and the part played in it by Deborah called forth a great poem—The Song of Deborah.

Another of the great judges was Gideon. While he lived the people were once more oppressed. This time it was the Midianites. They came up in great

swarms from the deserts of Arabia and overran the rich and fertile fields of Palestine. Year after year, the Israelites who toiled and toiled to cultivate their fields and reap their harvests, saw these people come and snatch away from them the fruits of their labor. Once more they were driven out of their villages and fields and into their dens and caves.

Gideon's family had suffered much from the Midianites. In one of their attacks two of his brothers had been slain. He collected an army and camped near a spring at the foot of Mount Gilboa. He took three hundred of his thirty-two thousand men and divided the three hundred into three bands. Each man had a pitcher and a lighted torch. They surrounded the enemy's camp at night, and at a signal from their leader, the three hundred torches flashed and the three hundred pitchers fell crashing to the ground. The men of Israel raised a great shout, crying:

"The sword of the Lord and Gideon!"

The enemy fled in the wildest panic and after the victory the people wanted to make Gideon king, but he said:

"Nay, the Lord is ruler over Israel."

Gideon lived to be quite old and his influence as a judge was great. Israel prospered while he lived and the people mourned him greatly when he died.

But after Gideon was dead, the Children of Israel forgot again all that the Lord had done for them. They turned again to the worship of their idols and were once more made slaves. Finally they remembered Jephthah, one of their brave men whom they had treated so badly that he had left his home. Now

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THE NIGHT ATTACK OF GIDEON.

they sent for him and asked him to be their leader.

"Why do you call on me?" he asked. "Did you not hate me?"

They told him that if he would but lead them to victory against the Ammonites, he should rule over the people of Gilead. So Jephthah became their judge and conquered the enemy, but you all know what happened to Jephthah. Like Saul, he made a rash vow. He declared that the first creature who came out to meet him when he returned home should be given as a burnt offering to the Lord who had given him the victory over his enemies. You remember who it was that he saw first. It was his own, dear daughter, his only child, who came running out, dancing and singing to greet her father on his return from the war. There was no one to save her as Jonathan was saved from being the victim of his father's rash vow. Jephthah thought he must keep his word, so, heart-broken and bowed down with grief, he offered up his only child as a sacrifice. The rash vows of Jephthah and Saul should be a lesson to us all.

After Jephthah there were other judges. First of all, there was Samson, that strong and reckless hero, whose story is so well known. And there was Eli, most of whose life was spent guarding the Ark in the Tabernacle at Shiloh. We know of Eli only in his old age, but it is possible that in his younger days he was a fine and successful soldier and had the confidence and obedience of the people. The judges were not chosen in the same way that the priests were. Their election was a matter of choice. The fact that Eli was a priest would not have made him a judge, but

it would not have kept him from being one. A man could be both soldier and priest in those days. In his later life Eli served only as a priest, and it was during these days that Samuel was born. Samuel was the last, perhaps the greatest of the judges, the prophet who had the greatest influence of any in Israel, unless perhaps it was Moses.

Twenty years had gone by since Samuel's mother had brought him, a little child, to Eli, the priest at Shiloh, and in those twenty years many things had happened. Samuel had seen the shame and disgrace which Hophni and Phineas had brought upon their father, and he had seen also the father's remorse. He had seen the Ark of the Lord carried into battle and captured by the Philistines. As Eli had grown old, Samuel had grown to manhood. The people recognized his nobleness of mind and heart and came to him in their distress. He was really a military leader, although his chief work lay, not in fighting battles himself, but in inspiring the people to fight. After he assembled the people together at Mizpah he was made their judge, and the Bible tells us, in one brief sentence, how patiently and faithfully from year to year he went from place to place doing his work. From village to village, from tribe to tribe he went, and the people knew that when he came their differences would be decided wisely and justly. Under his guidance and direction, their old enemies, the Philistines, were driven away and returned to trouble them no more while Samuel lived. The cities which they had taken were returned and there was peace in the land. Samuel was prophet, priest and ruler, all in one.

His own home was in Ramah. There he had his house in which he built an altar to the Lord. Here the people came to him from far and near for advice. Here he was when the young Saul came, seeking his

SAMUEL PRAYS FOR THE PEOPLE AT MIZPAH.

father's asses, and was anointed to be king over Israel.

Not much is known of the real history of Israel during the years that Samuel was a judge, but he

must have done a great work. Years make just the same difference in the life of a nation that they make in the life of a man. The reigns of Saul and David could not have been what they were had it not been for Samuel. He was greater than a king. In character he towers far above Saul whom he made king at the demands of the people. Saul reigned many years but his own unworthiness and weakness caused not only himself but his family to be rejected from the throne. Samuel crowned two kings. After Saul came David, from whom the royal line of Israel was descended.

All the judges did a great work in Israel. The greatest thing that Samuel did was not so much the upholding of the law and order as the restoring of religion in the land. He did more than any other one man to keep alive the standard of morality which the children of Israel had inherited from Moses. He was faithful all his long life to the task he had been appointed to perform and those who followed after him blessed his memory.

QUESTIONS

Who were the real heroes in the history of Israel?

How long did the Children of Israel wander in the wilderness?

Who led them into the Promised Land?

Where was the Promised Land, and what did the people of Israel do after they entered it?

Why was Israel different from other nations?

How was the word of God made known to the people?

What is the meaning of the word "prophet"?

Was a Judge in those days like the Judges of our day?

What was the difference?

Who was the first great leader in Israel?

What great events stand out in his life?

Which one of the Judges was left-handed?

How did he help the people of Israel to conquer the Moabites?

Which one of the Judges was a woman?

What did she do toward freeing her people?

How had the Children of Israel been oppressed by the Midianites?

Who was the Judge who delivered them and how did he do it?

Which one of the Judges made a rash vow?

What was the vow and how did he keep it?

Who was the last of the Judges in Israel?

What was the greatest thing he did for his people?

THE FOURTH STORY

A PROPHET AND A KING

HEN Samuel became a judge after the death of Eli, he found a very bad state of affairs in the kingdom. Because they had been visited with famine and disease and oppressed by the Philistines, the people thought the Lord had forsaken them. There was much work for Samuel to do and he thought his first and greatest work was to unite the people.

This was not an easy thing to do. Perhaps if I tell you something about the country itself you will understand why. Palestine is a small country. It is little larger than Wales. It is a land of mountains and hills. Through the centre of it runs the Jordan with its deep and fertile valleys. On the west is the Mediterranean Sea and the shore has no harbors. Here, in this little shut-in country, lived the ten tribes of the race we know as Israel. They were all of one blood. They had a common place of worship at Shiloh, where the Ark was kept. They all fervently believed that God was ruler over Israel—that they were the Chosen People of the Lord. But although they

had a common faith, the tribes were in no way united. Again and again they broke out in war against each other. Their lives were not unlike those of the clans who used to dwell in the Highlands of Scotland.

There was not only this war among themselves. They were surrounded by foes on all sides—the Moabites, the Ammonites, the Amalekites and greatest of all, the Philistines. These were their worst enemies. In the days of Abraham they were a race of shepherds and farmers. Now they owned five powerful walled-in cities and were a highly-civilized and prosperous people. They were a race of warriors. How, then, could a nation of scattered tribes who were always quarreling among themselves hope to conquer them? There was but one way, and unto Samuel was given the task of showing the children of Israel that way.

After the Ark had been captured by the Philistines, the priests who were not slain were scattered far and wide. Shiloh was desolate. Samuel knew that the first step in the great work was to kindle anew the religious faith of the people. They had been worshiping false gods and had fallen into evil ways. Samuel called them all together at Mizpah, told them that if they would repent, the Lord would still favor them. He set up a stone in the place, which was called Eben-Ezer, which means "The Stone of Help." Then the bands of prophets whom Samuel had gathered together went among the people from tribe to tribe keeping alive the faith.

But Samuel grew old, and when he felt age creeping upon him, he made his two sons judges over

Israel. But these sons, like Hophni and Phineas, walked not in their father's ways. They did wicked and evil things, and the people would not have them for judges. So the elders of Israel gathered themselves together and came to Samuel's house at Ramah and demanded that he make them a king.

Samuel was not pleased. He had tried to judge the affairs of Israel wisely and well. But he prayed to the Lord and He told Samuel that he should hearken to the voice of the people. If they wished a king, they should have one, but the Lord told Samuel that he should tell them all the things they must expect if they chose a king to rule over them. And the Lord said:

"It is I whom they have rejected—not thee. In that they have forsaken me and served other gods, so do they also unto thee."

So Samuel called the people together again and said unto them:

"This is the manner of the king that shall reign over you: He will take your sons from you and make them serve him. Some he will make to plow his ground and to reap his harvest. Some will be sent into battle where they will be killed. Some will be forced to drive his chariot and to run alongside of it as servants. Some will have to make his weapons of war and build his chariots. Nor is that all. He will take your daughters, also, and make them servants, cooks, bakers, confectionaries. And what is worse than all, he will take your vineyards, your olive-yards, your fields, a tenth of your seed and give to his officers and servants. And he will take your menser-

vants, your maidservants and the best of your young men, your beasts and animals and put them all to his own work. He will take a tenth of your flocks and ye shall all be servants to the king. When you cry out against these things which your king will do, the Lord will not answer you in that day."

But the people would not listen to the advice of Samuel. They said:

"Nay, we will have a king. We will be like the other nations. Our king shall go before us, judge us and fight our battles."

Then Samuel said:

"Go ye every man unto his own city."

Now, one of the leaders of the tribe of Benjamin was a man named Kish. He had a son whose name was Saul, a splendid, young fellow, good-looking and tall, much taller than any of his companions. From his shoulders upward he was higher than any of the other young men of Israel. He was modest and dignified and loved by his friends. One day, Kish, his father, discovered that his asses had wandered away, so he called his son to him and said:

"My son, take one of the servants with you and go and seek the asses."

Saul went. He and his companion traveled through the hilly country of Ephraim and through the land of Shalishah, but they were not there. They went on through the land of Shaalim, and through the land of the Benjamites, but they did not find the animals. And when they reached the land of Zuph, Saul realized that they were far from home, and he said to his servant:

"Let us return. My father will cease thinking about his asses and will be troubled about his son. Let us go back."

They turned to go back as they had come, but the servant said:

"This is Ramah. There is in this city a man of God. He is held in great honor by the people. All that he sayeth cometh surely to pass. Let us go to him. Perhaps he can tell us what we wish to know."

"But," said Saul, for it was the custom in those days whenever any one made a visit to the seer, or prophet, that he should take with him an offering or gift of some kind, "what can we take him if we go? Even our bread is all gone."

But the servant answered and said:

"I have yet the fourth part of a shekel of silver. That will I give to the man of God."

So they started to the city where the good man lived, and as they climbed the hill on the top of which was the city, they met a whole troop of young girls with water vessels going to the wells to get water. And they spoke to the young maidens and said:

"Tell us where the seer is."

"Behold, he is before you," they answered. "He is this day come to the city, for the people have a sacrifice and they will not eat until he comes, because he doth bless the sacrifice. Go ye therefore into the city before he goeth up unto the high place."

Saul and his servant went on, and when they were before Samuel's house, they met the prophet face to face. Saul and Samuel looked a moment at each other and the Lord said unto Samuel:

"Behold the man of whom I spoke to thee. He shall be king over my people Israel."

And when Samuel saw the splendid young fellow who came up to him modestly and said: "I pray thee,

"Tell Me, I Pray thee, Where is the House of the Seer?"

tell me where I shall find the seer," he thought to himself: "It is well." So he said in answer to Saul's question:

"I am the seer. Go up before me to the high place.

You shall eat with me this day. In the morning I will let thee go and will tell thee all that is within thy heart. As for the beasts thou hast been seeking, do not be troubled further about them. They are found."

Then Samuel said other things to Saul—things which Saul could not understand, for he did not yet know that he had been chosen to be king over Israel. So when Samuel said: "On whom is the desire of all Israel? Is it not on thee and thy father's house?" Saul did not know what the prophet meant. He answered and said:

"Why do you speak to me in this manner? Is not my family the least of all the families of the tribe of Benjamin? And is not the tribe of Benjamin the smallest of the tribes of Israel?"

Samuel took Saul and his servant to the guest chamber of his house where about thirty people were gathered together. He gave Saul the chief place among them and said to his servant:

"Bring the portion which I gave thee and said unto thee 'Set it by.' "

When the servant returned with the meat Samuel set it before Saul and said:

"Behold that which hath been reserved. Set it before thee and eat. It hath been kept for thee until the appointed time."

So Saul ate with Samuel that day and slept in his house at night. They went together up to the housetop where all the people could see them, and talked with each other, and early in the morning Samuel called to Saul, saying:

"Up, that I may send thee away."

Saul arose and walked with Samuel down to the end of the city and when they had reached the foot of the hill, Samuel bade Saul send his servant on ahead because he wished to speak with him alone. When the servant was out of hearing, Samuel took a vial of oil and poured it upon Saul's head and kissed him and said:

"The Lord hath anointed thee to be prince over His inheritance."

Then he told him other things which seemed to Saul very strange. He told him that after he had left him he should go his way homeward, and that when he came to Rachel's tomb he would meet two men who would say to him:

"The asses which thou hast sought are found, but thy father is saying, 'What shall I do for my son?' "

Samuel told him also that when he should come to the Oak of Tabor, he would find there three men, one of whom would be carrying three kids, another three loaves of bread, another a bottle of wine, and that when he came up to them, they would salute him and give him two loaves of the bread. And that when he went further and came to the hill of God, where lay the garrison of the Philistines, he would meet a band of prophets coming down from the high place with their musical instruments, and that when he saw them, the voice of the Lord would speak to him and he should prophesy with them. And all these things happened, just as Samuel had told Saul that they would.

He told Saul also that he should go on before him to Gilgal and remain there till he came, which would

be in seven days, and that when he came he would tell him further what to do. Saul did as he was told. When he came to the hill, he met the band of prophets, and the voice of the Lord spoke to him. He joined the prophets and began prophesying with them and the people said to each other:

"What has come unto the son of Kish? Is Saul, also among the prophets?"

When Saul reached home his uncle said to him:

"Whither went ye?"

"To seek the asses, and when we found them not, we went to Samuel."

"Tell me, I pray thee, what said Samuel to you?"

"He told us plainly that the beasts were found," said Saul, but concerning the other things of which Samuel had told him, he kept silent.

Then Samuel called the people together again and said to them:

"You have rejected your God who delivered you out of Egypt and out of the hand of all the kingdoms that oppressed you. You have said unto him, 'Give us a king.' Now, therefore, present yourselves before the Lord by your thousands and by your tribes."

When all the tribes had assembled, Samuel separated the tribe of Benjamin from the rest. Then he separated the family of Kish from the tribe of Benjamin, but Saul the tall, young son was not to be found. Samuel did not know what to do, but the Lord spoke to him saying:

"Behold, he hath hidden himself among the stuff."

They ran and brought Saul out of his hiding-place, and when he had come, Samuel said:

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"GOD SAVE THE KING!"

"See ye him whom the Lord hath chosen. There is none other like him among all the people of Israel."

And when Saul stood up before them in his fine young manhood, when they saw how tall and modest and dignified he was, the people were filled with rejoicing. They shouted and shouted till the hills and woods echoed with the cry:

"God save the king!"

QUESTIONS

How large a country is Palestine?

What famous river runs through the centre of it?

Near what sea does it lie?

What other nation did Israel resemble?

What was the first thing Samuel did after he became a Judge?

Where did he call the people together and what happened while they were there?

What was the demand which the people made of Samuel?

What were some of the things he told them a king would do?

Who was the first king over Israel?

What was he doing when he met Samuel?

Where did Samuel live? And what was he doing when the young man came to his house?

How did Samuel know that this was the man whom the Lord had chosen to be king over Israel?

Where did the young man spend that day and night?

What did Samuel say and do to Saul when he started homeward the next morning?

What three things did Samuel tell him would happen on his way home?

Did all come true that Samuel had said?

What well-known saying arose from the meeting of Saul with the band of prophets?

When he reached home did he tell anyone what had taken place between Samuel and himself?

When Samuel brought the tribes together to choose their king, what did Saul do?

Were the people pleased at the choice of Saul?

THE FIFTH STORY

THE FIRST SCHOOL

ERHAPS you would like to know something about the first schools in the world. It is hard, perhaps, for us to realize that there was a time when such a thing as a school had never been heard of. We must not forget that these days of which we speak, when Moses and Joshua, Samuel and Saul, David and Solomon lived and reigned over Israel, were long before the days of the Romans and the Greeks. The splendid civilization of these nations did not come till many centuries afterward.

In the history of every people you will find some one man, gifted and patriotic, who stands between an old government and a new, and is willing to die, if necessary, in order to make the new one better than the old. In the story of the people of Israel at this time, that man was Samuel, whose mother had brought him when he was a little boy to serve in the Tabernacle at Shiloh, where Eli, the old priest, watched over the Ark of the Lord. Samuel lived at Shiloh for many years. Each year his mother came to see him and brought him a little new coat which he wore when he assisted in the services in the Tabernacle. He grew up with Hophni and Phineas, the two bad sons

of Eli, without becoming a bad boy himself, but he had a good opportunity to see the evil things these sons did. So when he grew to be a man, he wanted to make things better.

Samuel realized that there is nothing which holds a nation together like a common faith. He felt very sorry to see the people worshiping false gods and doing evil things, and he knew that the only way in which to prevent them from doing such things was to make them see for themselves that they were doing wrong.

Samuel was a prophet. It is a little hard for us to understand just what a prophet was in those days. One thing we do know, however, and that is that he was not merely a man who foretold things which were about to happen. He was a man to whom the word of God was revealed in some mysterious way, and he, in turn, revealed it to the people. Samuel spoke to the people of Israel that which the voice of the Lord spoke to him. Centuries had gone by since the days of Moses. The Lord did not appear in visions to Samuel as He had done to Moses, but in some other way, which we can not understand, He revealed His wishes for His people to him. The life and conditions of the people had changed greatly since the days of Moses.

Samuel was not only a prophet. He was also a judge and a priest. When he had lived in Eli's family as a child he had felt a horror at the wickedness he saw about him, but it was the loss of the Ark which had been carried from the Tabernacle into battle, and had been captured by the Philistines, which

had made him saddest of all. Surely there was need in Israel just now of a man like Samuel, and he was worthy of his task.

Sometimes the prophet was called a seer. You

A School of the Prophets.

will remember that Saul, when he was sent out by his father to seek the asses which had wandered away, suddenly found himself at Ramah where Samuel lived. Saul seems not to have known of Samuel, for it was the servant who was with him who told him that there was a holy man at Ramah, and that everything

he said came surely to pass. So when Saul met Samuel, he did not know him, but he said:

"I pray you tell me, where is the house of the seer?"

But Samuel knew Saul. He knew he was coming, for on the day before, the voice of the Lord had said to him:

"This time to-morrow I will send thee a man out of the land of Benjamin, and thou shalt anoint him to be prince over my people Israel."

Whatever this power was which the prophets had, it must have been the gift of God. The prophets worked together for the good of Israel. Their work was not only religious. It was also military. The people of Israel were so oppressed by their foes that everybody had to fight. The prophet, like the others, would go quickly into battle if there was a reason for it. Their religious zeal did not keep them from being patriotic. At every great crisis in the history of Israel, a prophet arose, at the moment of greatest need, and delivered the nation from those who oppressed them. It was so with Samuel. The tribes of Israel quarreled among themselves. The Philistines oppressed them all. They lacked not courage but a leader. A great prophet was needed, a man who knew the men and the forces in Israel, one who was able to set aside all personal feeling and look at the situation from all sides. They needed also a man who had the divine authority for what he did, one who should make their plans for them and then show them the best way of carrying them out. Samuel was not much of a soldier himself, but he was a great leader, and inspired the people. He knew that if Israel ever be-

came a great nation the people must hold fast to their religious faith. They were so closely in touch with the customs and the civilization of the Canaanites that Samuel feared lest their own faith might be forgotten. There was but one thing to do, and that was to teach the people. This was why Samuel founded these first schools in the world, and they were called the schools of the prophets. He knew that the times in which he lived were critical, and that the crisis was religious as well as political.

No one can explain just what it is which makes a man feel that he has been called to do a certain thing and makes him willing to sacrifice everything else in life in order to do that thing. When the voice of the Lord first spoke to Samuel he was only a child. Yet he knew, and Eli, the priest, and the people knew and believed that Samuel was chosen to be a prophet of the Lord. As a prophet, he made known to the people the will of the Lord as it was revealed to him. As a priest, he made sacrifices and urged them not to lose faith. As a judge, he made and enforced their laws and decided their quarrels. As a military leader he urged them to first conquer their strongest enemies, the Philistines. While Samuel was offering a sacrifice at Mizpah, the Philistines fell upon them, and this seemed just the right moment for them to strike a blow. Samuel told them to trust in the Lord and He would not forsake them. There was a fierce battle, and the Philistines were driven away. They returned no more to trouble Israel while Samuel lived.

But the greatest thing which Samuel ever did for Israel was to found the schools of the prophets. In

such a country as his, where the people lived in scattered tribes, there was only one way in which they could be taught. Some one must go among them, from tribe to tribe, explaining to them the meaning of the law which the Lord had given unto Moses, which was the foundation of their faith, and teaching them to live up to that law. As the tribes grew, it took many preachers and teachers to do this. So Samuel founded these schools for the young men where they could be taught all those things which prophets, priests and judges ought to know.

There were four of these schools. One was at Ramah where Samuel himself lived. Here he had his own house, in which he had built an altar, and where the people came to him when they wished his advice or decision in their quarrels. The young men who came to the school at Ramah were taught by Samuel himself. What a queer-looking school that must have been! The pupils wore long robes, and sat on the floor. They studied their lessons aloud, making a great deal of noise. Each boy learned his own lesson and paid no attention to what his neighbor was doing. They still study aloud in the schools in Egypt and Persia and some of the other eastern countries.

There were schools also at Bethel, Gilgal and Mizpah. The man at the head of each school was called the "Father." The young men were taught many things. First of all, of course, they had to learn the law of Moses, which was their religion. This was made most of in the schools, because it was the main thing which Samuel wished to teach the people among whom these young men were to go when they had

finished school. They were taught also the sacred poetry of their earlier history. They were taught discipline, for obedience is necessary as well for him who is to be a teacher as for him who learns. No man can control others who can not first control himself. They were taught music, although we do not know much of the music of the Hebrews until the days of David, the sweet singer. They were taught also history,—the whole history of the Chosen People, from the earliest times until their own day.

One thing which Samuel was very anxious to keep alive in these schools was the gift of inspiration, or prophecy. The constant quarrels with the Philistines kept up the spirit of patriotism in the people of Israel, and as the wars were as much because of their different religions as for any other cause, Samuel saw the chance of making the religious life of his people a powerful thing. The prophets before his own times had not been such as he wished these young men to be. They had been in the habit of traveling about the land in a state of the wildest excitement, preaching to the people and urging them at the same time to fight the Philistines. In the deserts there were roving tribes called dervishes, who did the same thing. Samuel did not like this manner of keeping alive their faith. So he tried to teach his pupils that there was a better way. He wanted them to set a good example by the way they lived themselves. He wished them to dedicate their own lives to the work they had set out to do, which was to keep alive the simple religion of their fathers. Most of the prophets took the Nazarite vow, which required of them that they eat

clean food, wear clean raiment, think clean thoughts, live clean lives. Samuel himself was a Nazarite. His mother had made the vow for him when he was born.

One other thing the young men did who went to the schools which Samuel had founded. They got together all the legends and traditions of their country and made up the history of the Chosen People. Nearly all we know of this wonderful race can be traced in one way or another to the schools of the prophets. While the prophets did have that peculiar gift which we call prophecy, by which we mean the power to predict or foretell events which were to take place, their great power lay not in this but in the ability to reveal the meaning of these events to the people. The prophets had not always been in good repute before the founding of the schools. You will remember that after Samuel had anointed Saul and had told him that on his way homeward he would meet a band of prophets, and that he would be overcome by the spirit of the Lord and would prophecy with them, the people who saw Saul looked at him scornfully and said:

"Is Saul also among the prophets? What has come over the son of Kish?"

After the schools were established, however, and the young men were trained by Samuel and others for the prophetic work, they were no longer ridiculed. The people came to know that Samuel was the greatest man of their time. He crowned two kings, Saul and David, yet he was a greater man than either of them. His sons, like Hophni and Phineas, grieved and disappointed him. When he wished to make them

judges after him, the people would not have them. But Samuel's great work—the schools of the prophets—grew and grew, and long years after Samuel and Saul and David and Solomon were dead, we hear of these schools again when we read the story of Elijah and Elisha, the great prophets, who were only the followers and disciples of Samuel—a prophet greater than themselves.

QUESTIONS

What were the first schools in the world?

Who was the founder of these schools?

What was a prophet?

Could a man be a prophet, a judge and a priest at the same time?

By what other name was a prophet sometimes called?

Why was there need of schools in Israel at this time?

How many of these schools were there and where were they situated?

What was the principal thing which Samuel wished to teach those who went to the schools?

What was the only way in which these students could give to the people what they themselves had learned?

What else was taught in the schools?

What was the man at the head of the schools called?

Where was the school in which Samuel taught?

Did most of the prophets take the Nazarite vow as Samuel did?

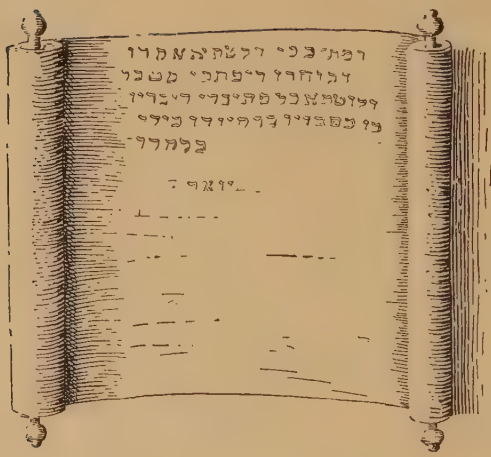
What great work did the students of these schools accomplish?

Were the prophets well thought of before the founding of these schools?

What kind of men were Samuel's sons?

Do we hear again, in after years, more about the schools of the prophets?

Which is the greater in history—the kings themselves or the man who makes kings?



THE SIXTH STORY

FATHER AND SON

ECAUSE the people of Israel had demanded of Samuel a King, he had brought them Saul, the son of Kish, according to the Lord's command. One day Saul was ploughing in his field when word was brought him that the Ammonites, their neighbors over east of Jordan, were about to make war upon them. They had boasted that they would make slaves of the Children of Israel and would put out their eyes. So the people of Israel sent a messenger to Gibeah, where Saul lived, and told him of the dreadful threat. Saul took the two oxen which he had been driving, killed them and cut them into pieces. He then sent the pieces throughout the length and breadth of the land. Along with them he sent the following stirring message:

"Whosoever among ye comes not out to fight against the Ammonites, this will I do also to his oxen."

So all the men of the kingdom rallied around Saul, the tall, splendid, young man. He himself led them into battle and their foes were driven from the land.

The soldiers rejoiced greatly over the victory and once more they sang and shouted:

"God save the king!"

Now, the Ammonites were not a powerful people like the Philistines. They were only a tribe. So the war between them and the Israelites was only a tribal war. To deliver the children of Israel from the Philistines was the great task which confronted Saul, and it was not the king himself, but his son, Jonathan, to whom the credit of capturing the Philistine stronghold in Gibeah was due. Saul's career was like that of many another man. It was different in the end from what it gave promise in youth of being. Saul was a great military leader. He was a patriot, but he lacked the personal qualities which go to make up the character of a really great man.

When he had been king for two years, the Philistines made war upon the people of Israel. The army of Saul, under command of Jonathan, attacked the camp of the Philistines which was at Gibeah, and after they had done this, all the Philistines arose and fell upon them. Saul's army was not prepared for this, and instead of rallying around their leader, the soldiers turned and fled. Saul and Jonathan were left with just a few hundred men and it seemed for a while that the Philistines would put an end to the people of Israel forever. As they did not resist, the Philistines divided their army into three parts and plundered the land far and wide. The soldiers of Israel ran and hid in caves and pits and old tombs and any place they could find. Saul himself was at Gilgal where Samuel had promised to meet and ad-

vise him what to do next. But seven days went by and Samuel came not, and Saul, although he had no right to do such a thing, offered a sacrifice to the Lord. Only the priests could make a burnt offering. The king had no right to do so. So, no sooner was this done than Samuel appeared. He was angry, and he warned the king that unless he obeyed the Lord, he would choose a new king in his place.

Now, while the Philistine army was divided into three parts and were thus more open to attack, Jonathan, by his boldness and courage, saved his father's kingdom for him. There was a pass across the mountains over which the people used to go to get from the river Jordan on the east to the Mediterranean Sea on the west. The valley of Michmash was on the side of the mountain which lay toward the Jordan, and the valley of Aijalon led down to the seacoast on the other side. On the south side of the pass was a place called Gibeah, and here Saul's six hundred frightened, trembling men were encamped. On the north side, in the valley of Michmash, the Philistines had their army. There was a sharp rock on the north side called Bozez, which means, "the shining." On the south side was another sharp rock called Seneh, which means, "the thorny," and between these two rocks lay the road.

From the high rock on the south side, Jonathan looked across the valley and saw that by a little boldness and cleverness, a single man could capture the place. So he decided that he would make a bold, single-handed attack. He did so, and it is one of the most dramatic acts in all Israel's history.

Now all the time the Israelites had been the slaves of the Philistines, the latter would not allow any smiths in the land. They feared lest they should make swords and spears for the people of Israel and that then they would rise up and fight them. Among all the soldiers of Israel, none had a sword or a spear except Saul and Jonathan, his son. In those days the men who fought had shields made of wood or brass or iron, and the captains and chiefs had servants who went wherever they went and carried their shields. These men were called armor-bearers.

When Jonathan decided that he would make this attack, he called his armor-bearer to him and said:

"Go with me to the camp of the Philistines, for who knows what the Lord may do for us this day."

The young man got Jonathan's spear and his shield and his bow and arrows and went with him. Jonathan said to him:

"We will stand where the Philistines can see us. If they call to us and say, 'Wait,' then we shall know that the Lord will not help us. But if they say to us: 'Come up and fight us,' we shall know that we shall win."

So they set out for the rock, and when the Philistines saw Jonathan and his armor-bearer, they said:

"Look! The Israelites are coming out of their holes at last."

Then they shouted to Jonathan saying:

"Come up to us!"

Jonathan and his armor-bearer climbed up the rocks, and when they got to the top the Philistines began fighting. Jonathan began shooting down

upon them and killed twenty of them. But they pressed him very hard, and perhaps things would have gone badly for Jonathan (for he was fighting alone against a large number) had not the Lord sent an earthquake which, at that very moment, caused the earth to tremble and heave and roll. The Philistines were frightened. They turned and fled into their camps.

Now, Saul did not know that Jonathan had gone out with only his armor-bearer, but he heard the tumult and looked from his tent. He saw the fighting and called his men together to see who was missing. He found that it was his son and knew that he was out there fighting with no one to help him. So he said:

"Let us go down after the Philistines by night and plunder among them till daybreak. And let us not leave a man of them."

The soldiers answered:

"We will do as the king thinks best."

But the priest spoke and said:

"Let us first draw near to God and ask Him."

But the priest could obtain no answer to Saul's question as to whether the Lord would that day deliver the Philistines into his hands, and because they could not get the answer, Saul thought that some one of them had been guilty of some act of which he had no knowledge. So without waiting longer for the answer, Saul rallied his men and was soon in hot pursuit. The men came creeping out of their caves and pits where they had hidden themselves, and joined in the fight. In their terror on account of the earth-

quake and in their confusion, the Philistines began fighting each other. Saul's army fell upon them, and chased them. Across the hill country of Ephraim, over the pass across the mountains, the Philistines went in mad flight, and the army of Israel took courage when they found their hated enemies flying before them.

But before they started out to make the attack, Saul, like Jephthah, made a rash vow. It was an act of great folly. He laid an oath upon the people that if any man tasted food before evening, he should be put to death. Jonathan, of course, was not there when Saul made this vow. He was out on the great, high rock fighting the Philistines. After the soldiers came up to support him and the enemy had fled, Jonathan, as he returned to camp, came upon a nest which some wild bees had made and from which the honey was dripping. Not knowing anything of the vow, he dipped his staff in the honey and ate of it. A soldier who was standing near saw Jonathan eating the honey and said:

"Thy father hath straitly charged the people with an oath saying: 'Cursed be the man that eateth food this day.' "

Jonathan looked about and saw how faint and weary and hungry the men were, and he said:

"My father hath done a foolish thing. See how mine eyes have lightened because I have tasted of this honey. If the people had eaten freely of the spoil to-day, there would have been much greater slaughter among the Philistines."

When the day was over the soldiers were so hun-

gry that they took the sheep and the oxen and the calves and slew them on the ground. Then they ate them without waiting for the blood to run off, and this was looked upon as a great wrong. It was thought wicked for the people to eat meat unless it had been properly killed and all the blood allowed to run off. The blood was used as an offering to the Lord. You know that the Jews still keep this custom. Their meat is always specially killed and prepared.

Saul was anxious to follow up the victory of the day by making further war upon their enemies. So once more the priests called upon the Lord for counsel. But the divine voice gave no response, and again the king thought it must be because some one had broken the oath. Just then a soldier came running in and told Saul of his son's supposed disobedience.

The king was greatly troubled. He loved his son, yet he felt that he must keep his word. He was afraid to let the people see that he had changed his mind lest they should think him weak and cowardly. He could not see that it is often courageous to change one's mind, but here was another evidence that Saul lacked the character of a great man. Every man knows that if he make a decision rashly and then discovers that it is a foolish thing, it is far more honorable to break than to keep it. An honest man will be honest with himself as well as with other people. But the king was torn between the agony of putting his son to death and of being false himself to the oath he had that day imposed upon all the people.

But Jonathan was a brave and noble fellow. He was both honest and fearless. When he saw the hard

position in which he had placed his father, he went to him and said:

"Here I am. I am ready to die."

And Saul answered;

"You shall surely die."

But for once the king found that the people were more powerful than he. They rose against Saul and cried:

"And shall Jonathan die who hath this day wrought our deliverance from the Philistines? Far from it. As the Lord liveth, not a hair of his head shall be touched, for he hath wrought with God this day. He shall not die!"

So Jonathan's life was spared, but after that night, Saul was never the same. The strain and distress seemed to have affected his mind. Part of the time he was like himself, but there would be days and days when he would sit alone all day long, thinking dreadful thoughts and speaking to no one. After this victory, Saul and Jonathan went back to their own country. Being a king in those days was a different thing from what it is now or what it was in the days of David and Solomon. Saul's court was his camp. The stern and hardy warriors who surrounded him, eager to help defend the liberties of Israel, were not like the courtiers and nobles who thronged the courts of the later kings. Instead of a sceptre, Saul held a spear. All during his reign there was trouble, and most of the time the fighting was severe, but after the defeat of the Philistines by Jonathan, they never again made a united effort to conquer Israel. Little bands of hostile Philistines sometimes fell upon

the outlying villages and towns, killed the inhabitants and carried off the spoil. Then they would escape before the army of Israel could get together and attack them. But for the most part they stayed in their own country, and after the fight in the valley of Michmash, Saul and Jonathan too stayed at home. They busied themselves with building up and strengthening their army. Saul made his cousin, Abner, captain of his army, and under his leadership they gained great victories. They defeated their enemies on all sides and kept them out of the land of Israel.

QUESTIONS

What happened while Saul was ploughing in his field?

How did he reply to the news which the messenger brought him?

Were the Ammonites a nation or merely a tribe? Where did they live?

What was the name of Saul's son?

What happened to the people of Israel when Saul had been king about two years?

What did the soldiers of Israel do when the Philistines fell upon them?

In what way did Saul disobey the command of Samuel?

What was the character of the land where the two armies were encamped?

What did Jonathan do when he saw that the Philistine army was divided into three parts?

Did the soldiers of Israel have swords and spears?

What did they have with which to defend themselves?

What did Jonathan do when he and his armor bearer went out on the rocks?

What did Saul do when he learned that Jonathan was out alone fighting the Philistines?

What happened to frighten the Philistines while Jonathan was fighting them?

What was the oath which Saul laid upon the people that day?

Did Jonathan know of the vow?

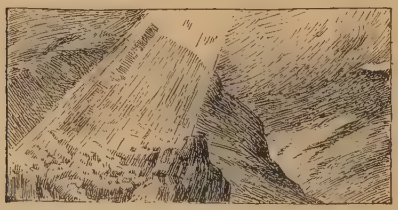
What did he say to his father when he learned of it?

What did Saul reply?

Why was Jonathan not put to death?

What happened to Saul after this?

When one finds that he has made a mistake is it not more courageous to change his mind than to keep his vow?



THE SEVENTH STORY

A LITTLE SHEPHERD OF BETHLEHEM

MANY years ago, one morning late in the summer, an old, old man was walking along the dusty road which stretched out over the hills and through the valleys toward Bethlehem. His hair and beard were white as the snow. He had a mantle wrapped around him, and in his hand he carried a staff on the end of which was fastened a bag made of skin. The bag was filled with oil. In those days these bags were called horns of oil, although we should never think of calling a skin bag a horn. The old man held in his hand a rope, the other end of which was fastened about the horns of a cow, and in spite of his great age, he was still tall and straight. He walked along briskly, for his business was of great importance and his mind was filled with many thoughts.

Would you like to know who this old man was? Well, perhaps you will remember the story of Hannah, the wife of Elkanah, who promised that if the Lord would answer her prayer and give her a son, she would lend him to the Lord as long as he lived. She

did not say, "I will give him to the Lord," for Hannah knew that the Lord would understand how hard it would be for a mother to give away her child. Therefore she said:

"I will lend him to the Lord all the days of his life."

And so this old man who was walking toward Bethlehem on this summer morning, leading the cow, was none other than Samuel the Prophet who was once that little boy.

Samuel's heart was heavy, for he could not help remembering another morning, many years before, when the people of Israel had gathered about him and had demanded that he give them a king. And he thought also of his own sons who had brought him all kinds of sorrow, so that when it came to choosing the king, the people would not have either of them. How sad a thing it is for a good father not to have good sons! Samuel remembered also the day when the Lord had sent him Saul, the son of Kish, and had said unto him:

"Behold the man of whom I spake. He shall reign over my people Israel."

So Samuel had obeyed the voice of the Lord, and for many years the people prospered, but alas, what a change had come over the appearance and character of Saul, the once-splendid king. That man of mighty stature, once warm-hearted, modest and dignified, was now a worn and broken old man, the victim of a strange and fitful melancholy. Already he had been warned by Samuel that his kingdom should not continue, and after the struggle with the Amalekites, he was finally rejected. We are told that Samuel came

no more to see Saul until the day of his death. But he grieved for him, just as everyone grieves for a man who has once been honored and powerful and who has brought about his own destruction. Now it had become necessary to have a new king in Israel, so once more the Lord spoke unto Samuel and said:

"How long wilt thou grieve for Saul whom I have rejected? Fill thine horn with oil and go. I will send thee to Jesse, the Bethlehemite, for I have chosen a king from among his sons." And Samuel went to Bethlehem.

There was fine farming-land in Bethlehem, and on one of the large and well-cultivated farms, Samuel found Jesse, the man whom he sought. He was now old, but he had lived all his life, as had his father before him, in this same place. Indeed, the people of the neighborhood still loved to tell the story of Jesse's grandfather who saw one day when he was harvesting the wheat and the barley, a beautiful but poor young girl who was following after the gleaners in the field, gathering up the little that they left behind them. He no sooner saw than he loved her, and although he was the owner of the large estate and she was only a poor girl, he had married her, to the surprise and pleasure of everyone.

As Samuel approached the house of Jesse, he could not but notice how well-kept and fertile were the fields. The corn tossed its head and laughed and whispered in the wind. The orchard was laden with apples, the vineyards with grapes. Many were the cows in the pasture. There was an abundance of milk, and Jesse's wife made butter and cheese. The hill-

sides were covered with sheep, and from the wool was made the clothing for the large family.

Jesse was the father of eight sons. Most of them were no longer young but had already grown to manhood. One of them, however, was much younger than the rest, and the young son's name was David. The work about the farm was divided among them. The task which fell to David was the tending of the sheep.

It was a much more difficult matter in those days to tend sheep than it would be now, for the woods back of the hills were wild and filled with fierce beasts. If the shepherd were careless, the lions and bears would steal softly out of the woods and kill the sheep. David had to fight them all the time, and all he had with which to defend himself and his flock were a stout stick and a sling. So he practiced the use of the sling until he became most skillful, and this was an accomplishment which, later, he found very useful to him.

Now, when the Lord had told Samuel that he should go to the house of Jesse, Samuel had asked; "How can I go? If Saul hear it, he will kill me."

Then the Lord commanded him to take a heifer with him and make a sacrifice, and to bid Jesse to the sacrifice. So that was how it happened that on this day, while David was watching his sheep out on the hills, there came to the village of Bethlehem this old man, leading a cow and bearing on his staff the horn of precious oil. And when they saw that the old man was the Prophet Samuel, who could, they thought, call down the thunder and the lightning from the clear sky, the men of Bethlehem were much afraid. But they went out to meet him.

"Do you come peaceably?" they asked of the prophet.

"Peaceably," said Samuel. "Come with me. I go to make sacifice to the Lord."

So their fears were set at rest and the men followed Samuel till they came to the village well. When all was in readiness for the sacrifice, Samuel raised his eyes and looked at the seven sons of Jesse, one after the other. First he saw Eliab, the oldest, tall and finely built and dignified, and he thought to himself that this must be the one chosen of the Lord. But even as he looked he heard the voice of the Lord saying:

"The Lord seeth not as man seeth. Man looketh at the outward appearance, but the Lord looketh on the heart."

Now Jesse was very proud of his handsome oldest son and he was filled with disappointment when Samuel shook his head, for Samuel knew that Eliab was not the chosen one. Then Jesse called Abinadab, his second son, and made him pass before Samuel. Again Samuel shook his head.

"Neither hath the Lord chosen this one," he said.

Then Jesse called Shammah, the third son, and then the fourth, till all the seven had passed before Samuel. But the Lord had not yet spoken, so Samuel said unto Jesse:

"Are these all your sons?"

Jesse answered that there was still one, the youngest, David, who watched the sheep out on the hills.

"He is a mere lad," he said. "Surely you would not care for him."

"Send and fetch him" said Samuel, "and we will not sit down until he come."

So one of the brothers went to the pasture on the hillside where he knew he would find the lad.

Now, while tending sheep was in those days often a difficult and dangerous task, at other times it was a pleasant and peaceful occupation. During the long days David found that he had much time to himself, and like every other boy who spends his hours in solitude and out-of-doors, he learned to love the green grass, the hills, the running waters and the star-strewn sky. They awakened music in his soul. He became a singer. He made his own songs and sang them, accompanying himself on the harp.

Have you ever stopped to think that all great things are born of solitude? Can you imagine a musician working out a great concerto, or an artist painting a fine picture, or an inventor perfecting his invention, or a military leader planning a campaign amid the hurry and hustle and roar of the world? No. It is only in solitude and restfulness that we are able to work out the beautiful things which lie hidden within ourselves. It was so with David.

Samuel looked up and saw him coming. He could scarcely believe that the choice of the Lord could fall on this lad. He looked so young, although he was beautiful of countenance, with just a touch of red in his hair and on his cheeks, slender and straight and good to look upon, and as brave as he was handsome. But when he came up to him Samuel poured upon David the precious oil and went away. And Jesse and his wife and their sons and daughters wondered and were troubled. They could not understand the act of the prophet. But David understood. He

knew that he had been chosen of the Lord for some great purpose.

Not long after this, the condition of Saul, the king, became pitiful. He was oppressed by the war with the Philistines. He might no longer have the counsel and guidance of Samuel. Trouble, disappointment, and worse than either, an uneasy conscience, were telling terribly upon him. He could neither sleep nor rest. At times he was almost beside himself and acted like an insane man. The physicians who attended him suggested that he might find in music that which would soothe and quiet him.

DAVID, THE SHEPHERD BOY, COMING FROM THE FIELD.

Is not the power of music a wonderful thing? Music is capable of expressing every emotion of the human heart except anger and fear. These we can not sing. But joy and sorrow, love, grief, pain, pride, glory, gratitude and thanksgiving—these we may express in song. All the beautiful hymns which we love to sing were written because of some emotion in the heart of the writer which cried out for expression and would not otherwise be stilled. And because music is born of the soul, it speaks to the soul in us. This explains in part the wondrous effect of music upon those who have not themselves the slightest musical knowledge or the least power of musical expression. To-day some of the cleverest and most progressive physicians are trying the power of music upon the

feeble-minded and insane in our large asylums. But the plan is not new. It dates from the olden times, for when Saul's physicians saw his pitiable condition, they said:

"Find a man who is a cunning player upon the harp, and it shall come to pass that when the evil spirit is upon thee, he shall play with his hand and thou shalt be well."

Then some one told him of David, the son of Jesse, of his songs and his music, his skill with the harp. And the king called his messengers to him and said:

"Find the youth and bring him hither."

"ARE THESE ALL YOUR SONS?"

So the messengers went forth, and a few days later, David stood at the door of his father's house surrounded by his father and mother, his brothers and sisters. The messengers waited while he said goodbye. He took with him an ass laden with gifts for the king —bread from his mother's oven, wine from the grapes which grew in the vineyards, and a tiny kid from the flock of goats. Across his shoulder was hung his harp. In his hand he still carried his stick and his sling which he found so useful as a shepherd.

The king's heart went out to the beautiful boy whom the messengers brought back with them. Saul loved David dearly. Perhaps it was partly the natural longing of Age for Youth which caused Saul to bestow so great an affection upon him, but perhaps it was because when the king was ill and weary and oppressed with his many cares, nothing but David and his harp could ease his distress of mind and body and make him forget his sorrows. And thus it was that the little shepherd of Bethlehem left the home of his childhood and began a new life in the service of the king.

QUESTIONS

Where was Samuel going on this morning?

Why was he going? And what was he going to do with the cow he had with him?

What else did he have with him?

What kind of a country was Canaan?

What grew there most abundantly?

What was the warning which Samuel had given to Saul?

What did the people of Bethlehem say when they saw Samuel?

To whose house was he going?

How many sons had Jesse?

What was the name of the youngest son?

What part of the work of the farm fell to him?

What did Samuel do when Jesse's sons passed before him?

What did he do when David came before him?

What was the condition of Saul at this time?

What did the physicians think would be good for him?

What did David take with him when he went from Bethlehem to the court of Saul?

In what else was David skillful beside playing the harp?

Did his music do the king good?

Did Saul really love the little shepherd boy?

What do you think made David a musician and a singer?

THE EIGHTH STORY

SLAYING A GIANT

DAVID had not been at the court of the king very long when he had to go home again. War had broken out between the people of Israel and the Philistines. Saul gathered his whole army together and they went forth to battle. You will remember that David was the youngest of Jesse's eight sons, much younger than all his brothers. He had to stay at home, for of course all his brothers must join the army and fight for their country and their king. David heard no more the music of the harp. On all sides were the noise of drums and the sounds of war. Jesse, his good, old father, was too old to go to war, so of the large family only David and himself were left to tend the sheep and look after the work on the farm. And there was much to do, for the farm was well cultivated. The harvests were plentiful and the flocks were large.

But although Jesse and David were kept very busy, the father's heart often longed for his seven fine sons who were out fighting the Philistines. He was anxious to hear from them, so one day he said to David:

"Go you to the army, David, and bring me news of your brothers. Learn how the war goes. Take these ten loaves of bread and this basket of parched corn to your brothers. Here also are ten cheeses for their captains. Haste now and bring me news of your brothers."

David took the bread and the corn and the cheeses and started on his way. He went over the hills and down the long valley until he came to the great open plain where the two armies lay drawn up ready for the fight. There were hills on each side of the plain, one on the east and one on the west. There were soldiers everywhere. On all sides there were the usual sounds of war. A little brook ran across the plain between the hill on the west where the great Philistine army was encamped and the one on the east which was covered with the soldiers of Israel.

David was not afraid of the soldiers. He was only a boy and therefore felt that they would not harm him. If they troubled him at all it would only be to take away from him the bread and corn and cheeses which he was carrying to his brothers and their captains.

When he came a little closer to the two camps, however, he was suddenly startled by a great shout. The Philistines shouted first so loudly that it seemed to David as if the sound must touch the skies. Then the army of Israel answered back, and in another moment, David saw something which filled him with wonder. He heard a voice, and it was as loud as the voices of ten men speaking at once. He was too far away to understand what it was that this terrible

voice said, but when he came nearer, he saw standing in the middle of the plain, with his back to the Philistines and his face toward the Israelites, a powerful, mighty giant. He was ten feet high, and was dressed from head to foot in an armor of brass. The helmet on his head was brass also, and his breastplate, and the target upon his back and the boots on his feet. Just think what strength he must have had to carry all that weight and to fight with it on. He had a huge spear in one hand, a sword in the other, and in front of him walked his servant, carrying his shield. It was Goliath, the giant of Gath.

The words which the giant said, and which David was too far away to hear were these:

"Choose you a man from among you and let him come to me. If he be able to fight with me and to kill me, we will be your servants. But if I prevail against him and kill him, then shall you be our servants and serve us."

But the soldiers of Israel looked at this terrible man and were afraid. Of all the thousands of soldiers in the army of Israel, not one dared to go out and fight against Goliath. But David's soul was stirred within him. He did not understand exactly what it all meant, so he spoke to the first man he saw and said:

"Tell me, what does it all mean?"

And the man replied:

"Look you. Yonder is Goliath, the mighty giant of Gath. Every day at this hour, he comes out and defies us. Our king has promised that whosoever shall fight and overcome him shall have a great re-

ward. He shall have gold, and may also have the king's daughter for his wife. But none dares attempt to conquer Goliath."

David became very thoughtful. He was only a boy, and he looked at Goliath, covered with his brass armor and wondered if there was not some way in which he could be overcome. Suddenly, he seemed to remember something. He put his hand in the bag he carried over his shoulder and took out his sling.

"Go you to King Saul," he said to the man, "and tell him I will try to kill Goliath."

These had been sorry days for Saul and the army of Israel. The king was no longer his vigorous and courageous self. The soldiers were discouraged and down-hearted. They thought the Lord had forsaken them. They had lost faith in Him, and loss of faith always makes cowards of men. Saul did not dare to lead his army out to battle, and every day they had to endure the scornful taunts of the Philistines and the humiliation of being insulted by a challenge which no man dared to take up. For forty days in succession, Goliath had come to the banks of the little brook and dared anyone from the army of Israel to meet him in battle.

The man went to the king and told him what David had said. But among the soldiers who surrounded Saul was Eliab, David's older brother. When he heard the message which David had sent to the king, he was very angry. Perhaps he remembered the day when Samuel the prophet had come to his father's house in Bethlehem and had refused him, and had chosen David instead. He thought, as older broth-

ers are apt to think, that David was nothing but a foolish child, and that if he attempted to fight Goliath he would only go and get killed. So Eliab spoke out in his anger against David and said:

"Why art thou come? And what has become of the sheep that thou shouldst be watching at home? I know thy pride and the naughtiness of thy heart. Thou art come here only that thou mayst see the battle."

But David said to his brother:

"What have I done? Is there not a cause?"

Then he turned away from his brother to another man who stood near and said:

"I pray you, tell the king that I will try to slay the giant."

Finally David was taken before Saul who, strange to say, did not remember him. The poor, moody, despairing king was struck with the courage and daring of the young shepherd. But he said:

"You are brave, my son, but you are not able to fight this Philistine. You are only a boy. He has been a warrior from his childhood."

But David answered:

"Let me try. I have fought the bears and the lions since I was ten years old. I have seized them by the beard and killed them. What I have done to the beasts of the fields I can do also to Goliath. The Lord who hath delivered me out of the mouth of the lion and out of the paw of the bear will deliver me also out of the hand of this Philistine."

The king was silent. He wanted to give the boy an opportunity to show his courage, but it seemed

to him, and to all of them, that it was like throwing a lamb to the wolves. At last David begged the king once more to allow him to try. So Saul took David to his tent and offered him his own armor. But the king was the tallest man in the whole army and David was but a boy, so of course he could not wear the king's armor. Saul's helmet came down over David's ears and the coat of mail reached his heels. He threw them off.

"I can not wear them," he said. "I can fight better in my own way."

Then said Saul, the king, unto David:

"Go, my son, and may the Lord be with you."

The king and David's brothers stood watching him as he went out on the plain to meet Goliath. David took his staff in his hand, the same stout stick he had always carried when he went out to the hills to tend his father's sheep. He had, also, his sling, and when he came to the little brook which ran across the plain, he stooped down and gathered up some smooth, round stones. Then he went out into the centre of the plain and the soldiers of both armies stood watching.

Goliath came out also in all his heavy armor, his servant carrying his shield before him. He was curious to see the champion whom the Israelites were sending out to fight against him, and when he looked down and saw this red-cheeked boy with a staff in one hand and a sling in the other, he grew terribly angry.

"Am I a dog," he cried, "that thou comest at me with a stick? I will kill thee, boy, and I will give thy flesh to the fowls of the air and the beasts of the field, and they shall pick thy bones."

But David answered him in these soul-stirring words:

"Thou comest to me with sword and spear and shield, but I come to thee in the name of the Lord God of Hosts whom thou hast defied."

Then David ran to meet Goliath, and the armies from the hills on both sides looked on in breathless silence. As David ran toward the giant, he put his hand in his shepherd's bag and took out one of the smooth stones he had picked up from the brook and put it in his sling. He lifted up the sling and shot the stone from it with all his might. Straight as an arrow it flew and struck the giant in the middle of the forehead. Down went Goliath to the ground, his great brass armor clanging as he fell. When David saw that the giant had fallen, he ran to him, took out his great sword which was so heavy that he could hardly lift it and cut off Goliath's head.

When Saul and Eliab and the soldiers of Israel realized what David had done,—when they saw that by so simple a means as a sling shot this little shepherd boy had done what they with all the strength of their army behind them had not been able to do, when they realized that David had really rid them of their great enemy, they could scarcely believe their eyes. The Philistines were scarcely less astonished. They saw that their mighty warrior, their champion, was dead, killed by a boy with a sling. They thought that the Lord had sent this upon them in punishment for their evil deeds. They fell to lamenting over Goliath's death. They broke and ran in great confusion. The army of Israel, with King Saul and Jonathan at the

head, broke into loud shouts of rejoicing and gave chase. They pursued them far over the hills till finally they were driven from the plain.

Now, Abner, the son of Saul's brother, was captain of the king's army, and when Saul saw David go forth to fight the giant, he said to Abner:

"Abner, whose son is this youth?"

And Abner answered:

"As thy soul liveth, O king, I know not."

"Inquire thou whose son he is," said the king.

Abner started to obey the king's command, but as he went forth from the tent, he met David coming in with the great, bleeding head of Goliath in his hand. And Saul said unto David:

"My son, thou hast surely served the Lord this day. Tell me whom thou art."

And David answered:

"I am the son of thy servant Jesse, the Bethlehemite. He is anxious about my brothers. I but came to bring bread and parched corn for them and cheeses to their captains. I will return now to my father."

But the king would not let him go. He took him into his tent. David behaved wisely, and Saul made him his armor-bearer and gave him command over some of his men of war.

QUESTIONS

What did David do when the war broke out again with the Philistines?

What did the other sons of Jesse do?

What did Jesse send by David to his sons?

When David came near to the camps of the two armies what did he hear and see?

What was the giant's name and what kind of armor did he wear?

What was it Goliath said to the soldiers of Israel?

When David saw the giant what did he say?

What did Saul say when he received David's message?

When David went forth to meet Goliath what did he take with him?

What did Goliath say when he saw David?

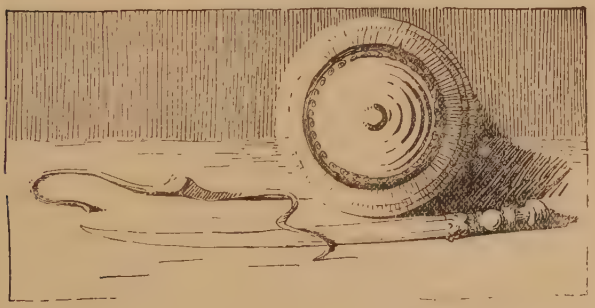
What did David reply?

How did David kill the giant?

What did the army of the Philistines do when they saw that Goliath had been slain?

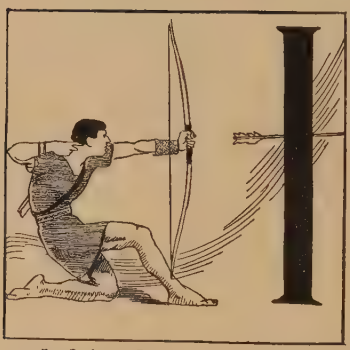
What position did Saul give to David?

Did he return any more to his home in Bethlehem?



THE NINTH STORY

TWO FRIENDS



IN ALL the world there is no more beautiful story than that of David and Jonathan. As we journey through life we think we have many friends, but when we grow older and begin to look back over our lives, we realize that the real friends we have had have been few. A true and lasting friendship between man and man is a rare thing. David and Jonathan were true friends. They loved and were loyal to each other as long as they lived.

You will remember that after the battle with the Philistines, David did not return to his home in Bethlehem any more. When he went back to Saul's tent carrying with him the head of Goliath, he saw there a youth about his own age. This boy was Jonathan. He and David became great friends. Jonathan was so pleased to think that David had killed the giant who had made so much trouble for his father, that he took off the beautiful robe he wore and put it on David. Then he gave him his own sword and his bow and his girdle. He and David pledged them-

selves to be loyal to each other, and wherever Jonathan went, there David went also. They became such friends that Saul, the King, began to be jealous, and not long afterward something happened which made him more so.

"Thou Shalt Have My Robe and Spear," said Jonathan.

As the army was returning home after the battle in which David had killed Goliath, they were greeted with scenes of great rejoicing. All the women and girls of the cities of Israel which lay along the way

of their return came out to meet them. They carried their musical instruments in their hands and sang and rejoiced, and among the songs they sang was this:

Saul has slain his thousands
And David his ten thousands.

Now, it was the custom in those days, just as it is in ours, to give welcome to the men who win great victories. The fight with Goliath seemed to be a turning point in David's history. The Philistines looked upon the young shepherd boy who had slain their champion as a powerful enemy. When the people of Israel sang this song, they did not intend it to be in any way a slight to Saul, their king. They were only trying to show their enthusiasm for David, the hero of the hour. The king, however, on account of the morbid condition of his mind and his uneasy conscience, saw it in quite another light. He brooded over it and the dreadful jealousy grew and grew in the unhappy king. He was very angry when he heard the song. He thought they were giving more honor to David than to himself, and because his mind was already failing, the more he thought of it the more angry he became.

"They have ascribed unto David ten thousands and to me only thousands," he said. "All David did was to kill one giant, while I with my army chased the great Philistine horde from the plains. I will keep watch over David. He will be getting my kingdom the first thing I know."

From that day forth, the evil spirit seemed to have

complete control over Saul whenever he saw David. He watched him all the time and became more jealous and angry. Moreover, he was a little afraid of David, for he knew that the Lord was with him. David could not understand what troubled the king, and when these terrible spells would come upon him, he would go for his harp and would play sweet music upon it and sing to Saul and try to make him forget his sorrows whatever they were. But Saul only grew worse, and finally he made David captain over a thousand men and sent him forth to fight hoping that he would be killed.

Even after he was gone, though, the king could not help thinking about David, for David was a fine soldier and everywhere he went he was successful. News was brought to Saul that all Israel and Judah loved him, and the king grew more and more unhappy. At last he called his son Jonathan and all his servants to him and told them they should kill David. But Jonathan loved David as his own soul and resolved that he would save him if he could. So he went to David and said:

"My father seeketh to slay thee. I pray thee, take heed of thyself in the morning. Hide thee in a secret place. I will go out in the field with my father and will talk to him of you."

So David did as Jonathan told him. He hid in a safe place, and Jonathan went with the king and spoke to him of David.

"Wherefore wilt thou slay David?" Jonathan asked. "He hath not sinned against thee. He took his life in his hand and slew the Philistine, and the

Lord gave us a great victory. Let not the king sin against his faithful servant."

Saul heeded the words of his son this time. He promised that David should not be put to death. Jonathan sought David out and brought him back and he served the king as before. But all this could not last very long, for war broke out again and David went once more to fight against the Philistines. There was great slaughter. David drove the Philistines away, and when he returned home after a great victory, Saul was angry and jealous as before. He sat in his apartments with his spear in his hand and when David approached he thrust it at him, but David avoided it and the spear stuck in the wall. David slipped out of the palace and fled to his own house, but the king sent spies to watch him.

You will remember that Saul promised the hand of his daughter to the man who would kill Goliath. So she had become David's wife, and when he came to her on this night she said:

"If thou save not thyself to-night, tomorrow thou shalt be slain."

Then they began to think how they should get David out of the house without the king's spies seeing him, and suddenly, Michal, David's wife, thought of a way. She let David down from a window in a basket, then made a figure which looked like a man and placed it in David's bed. When the king sent his soldiers after David, She said:

"He can not come. He is sick."

Then Saul said to his messengers:

"Bring him to me in his bed that I may kill him."

They went to get David, according to the king's command, but when they came to the house, they found only the figure in the bed. Saul was angry at his daughter and said:

"Why hast thou deceived me and let mine enemy go?"

And David's wife answered and said:

"He came to me and said unto me, 'Let me go.' Why should I give him up?"

David feared to go near Saul again, but Jonathan came to him, and he said to his friend:

"What have I done? What is my sin against thy father that he seeks my life?"

"God forbid that thou shouldst die," answered Jonathan. "My father doeth nothing great or small but that he tells me. Why should I hide this from thee? It is not so."

But David knew that Jonathan was mistaken, that it was because Saul knew how Jonathan loved him that he had not told him, so he answered:

"As truly as the Lord liveth, there is but a step between me and death."

Jonathan was greatly troubled. He could not believe that his father would kill his friend and he said to David:

"Whatsoever thy soul desireth, I will do for thee."

Then David said:

"To-morrow is the new moon. I should not fail on that day to sit at the king's table. But I will go and hide myself in the field. If the king shall miss me and shall ask where I am, say to him that I have asked leave of you to go to my father's house in Bethle-

hem to be present at the yearly sacrifice of my family. And if the king, your father, sayeth, 'It is well,' then shall thy servant have peace. But if he be angry, then will you know that he hath determined to take my life."

The two friends talked a little longer and David begged Jonathan that, if he believed him false, he would kill him himself and not leave it for his father to do. But Jonathan said:

"The Lord God of Israel be my witness. I will sound my father, and what he sayeth I will tell unto thee."

"But" said David, "how shall I know if thy father speak harshly?"

"Come," replied Jonathan. "Let us go out into the field."

They went. David and Jonathan made a new pledge to each other that they would be loyal and honest to each other. Then said Jonathan:

"Thou shalt surely be missed, for thy seat at the king's table will be empty to-morrow. When thou hast been gone three days, thou shalt go down quickly to the place you and I know of and hide thyself. And I shall shoot three arrows toward thee, as if I were shooting at a mark. And I will bring a boy with me who shall run to gather up the arrows, and if I say to him, 'The arrows are on this side of thee,' thou wilt know that no harm is to come to thee. But if I say to the lad, 'The arrows are beyond thee,' then go thy way, for thou wilt know that the king means thy death. The Lord do so to me and more also if I speak not the truth. The Lord is between thee and me forever."

So David went and hid in the field as Jonathan had bidden him, and when the new moon was come on the morrow, the king sat down at his table. Jonathan stood by his father's side, and Abner sat near, but David's place was empty. The king took no notice of his absence on this first day, but on the second day, when David's place was empty again, he said to Jonathan:

"Wherefore cometh not the son of Jesse to our table neither yesterday nor to-day?"

"David hath earnestly asked leave of me to go to his father's house in Bethlehem where the yearly sacrifice of his family is being held. Therefore he is not come to the king's table."

Saul grew very angry when he heard his son's words. "Thou son of a perverse, rebellious woman" he said, "do I not know that thou hast chosen the son of Jesse to thine own shame? So long as David liveth, thou shalt not be established nor thy kingdom. Bring him unto me for he shall surely die."

"Wherefore shall he be put to death?" asked Jonathan. "What hath he done?"

These were the same words which Jonathan had spoken to his father when he wished to put David to death before. Saul was so angry when he heard them again that he threw his spear at his son as he had done at David. Then Jonathan knew that if his father could find David he would surely be slain. He was very angry at his father. He left his table and would eat no more, and was grieved in his heart for his friend.

But he was true to the promise he had made to

David. In the morning he went out to the field and took the arrows and the little boy with him, as he had told David he would. He told the boy to run and bring back the arrows as fast as he shot them. The little fellow did so, and finally Jonathan shot an arrow far beyond him and said:

"Go in Peace, My Friend David. The Lord Shall Be Between Thee and Me Forever."

"Is not the arrow beyond thee?"

David, in his hiding-place heard the words which told him that the king had determined to kill him. When the boy came back with the arrows, Jonathan told him to take them and go back into the city. When he was gone, David came out of his hiding-place. He

and Jonathan wept together and kissed each other. Then Jonathan said:

"Go in peace, my friend David. The Lord shall be between thee and me and between thy children and my children forever. We have sworn it. Go in peace!"

David was an outcast. He went into the wilderness and hid himself. With a sad heart Jonathan watched him till he was out of sight. Then he, too, departed and took his way back into the city.

It is good to remember in the history of this period, which is mostly a story of war and rivalry and bloodshed, the beautiful friendship of these two men for each other. There was just as much reason why Jonathan should distrust David as that Saul should. He was the son of the king, the heir to the throne. If David were popular enough and strong enough to harm Saul, could he not harm Jonathan also? Jonathan stands out as the finer, more unselfish figure of the two, for to maintain his friendship with David, he had to face his father's anger and suspicion. Yet he was loyal to David as long as he lived, as David was to him.

QUESTIONS

What did Jonathan do when David returned to Saul's tent carrying the head of Goliath?

What did Saul think when he saw what fast friends David and Jonathan had become?

What happened as the army of Saul was returning home after the battle with the Philistines?

Why did Saul fear David?

What did he do first to get him out of the way?

What did Jonathan say when Saul commanded him to kill David?

Did the king heed his son's words?

When David came back after the next battle with the Philistines what happened?

When David fled from the palace where did he go first?

What was the trick by which Michal, his wife, saved his life?

Did Jonathan forsake David when Saul drove him away?

What were the words Jonathan was to say to let David know whether or not Saul intended to kill him?

What happened when Saul and his followers sat down to the table and David was not there?

Was there not as much reason why Jonathan should fear David as that his father should?

Was it not strange also that David should not distrust Jonathan who was heir to the throne?

Which of these men do you admire most?

THE TENTH STORY

A YOUNG OUTLAW

ONATHAN and David bid each other good-by, and after he had learned that the king would take his life if he stayed longer, David fled from the court of Saul into the wilderness. As he wandered there, tired and hungry, his mind went back over the last few years to the days when he had roamed over the green meadows and by the shining waters, singing to his harp and tending his father's sheep in Bethlehem. He recalled the visit of Samuel to his father's house, when the old, white-haired prophet had chosen him from among all his father's sons and had anointed his head with oil. He had gone to Saul's court, but had had to go back home and stay with his father while the older sons went to fight, and when he went later to the king's camp he had grown so that Saul did not know him. But he had killed Goliath, and since then he had gone with Saul wherever he went. He loved the king and the king loved him, and David knew that Saul's unhappiness was due as much to his love for him as it was to fear or jealousy.

It is not hard to understand how the king felt. He had sons of his own, and he wanted them to reign after him. When he saw how all the people loved David and followed after him, and especially when he saw that Jonathan loved him so much that he was willing to let David be king instead of himself if the people wished it, Saul was filled with anger and alarm. So it was not surprising that the king, although he loved David dearly, felt that he must be gotten out of the way.

So David took refuge in the wilderness, and like Robin Hood of England, became an outlaw. He knew he must keep out of sight for awhile and out of reach of the king's displeasure. As he wandered in the wilderness, he arrived one day, weary and half-starved, at a village called Nob where at that time the Ark was being kept, watched over by the priests. He went to the house of the chief-priest and asked for bread and a sword. But the priest said:

"There is no bread save that which is on the holy table."

Now David did not dare to tell the priest that he was fleeing for his life from the wrath of the king. He knew, too, that none but the priests were permitted to eat of the bread for the holy table—the shew-bread as it was called. So he said:

"I am on the king's business. Give me of the bread."

The priest gave him five loaves. Then David said once more:

"I am on the king's business. I have no sword. Give me one."

"There is no sword here save that with which David slew the giant Goliath of Gath. It is wrapped in a cloth."

"Give it to me," said David, and the priest did as he was told.

There was at Nob a man by the name of Doeg. He was the king's chief herdsman, and when he saw what had been done—that the priests had given David the shew-bread and the sword of Goliath, he went straightway and told Saul. The king was very angry and commanded his soldiers that they should go to Nob and kill all the priests. At first he could not find any one to do this. Not a man was willing to lift a hand against the priests, but finally, Doeg did it himself. He fell upon them with such cruel fury that only one escaped. This was Abiathar. He fled and joined David and became one of his band.

After the death of the priests, David realized that he was not safe at Nob any longer so he went to his father's house in Bethlehem. He told them of the king's anger, how he had not only threatened but had twice tried to take his life with his own hand. David thought his father and mother were no longer safe in Bethlehem, so he took them over into the land of Moab, where his beautiful grandmother, Ruth, had lived and where he still had many kinsmen. They crossed the Jordan and David put his father and mother under the protection of the king of Moab.

David took refuge in the Cave of Adullam, just across the border of Philistia. Here a band of about four hundred men gathered about him. One day, Abiathar, the priest who had escaped the slaughter at

Nob, came to David and told him what Doeg had done. He said that Doeg had gone to Saul and had said:

"I saw the son of Jesse come to Nob, and the chief priest gave him the shewbread and the sword of Goliath."

Then Saul had sent for the chief priest and said:

"Why hast thou conspired against me with the son of Jesse? Why hast thou given him a sword to slay me?"

The chief priest answered:

"Who is so faithful among all thy servants as David, thy son-in-law? Who is so honorable in thy house? I knew nothing of trouble between thee and him."

When the king heard these words his old madness came upon him again and he gave orders that not only the chief priest but all the others as well should be put to death.

"Behold it is only I that have escaped," said Abiathar.

David's band of outlaws grew larger and stronger. Some of them had joined him because they were in distress, some because they were in debt, some only because they were discontented and were tired of staying at home. They were a lawless crowd, and to tell the truth, were not very welcome anywhere. They were wild and hardy. They lived in the open, under the blue skies. They fought and were fought by the Philistines. They chased and were chased by the Amalekites. Some good things they did, however. They defended the shepherds from the attacks of

brigands, but they made the sheep masters pay for their protection by giving them food and clothing.

Among the hills, a little to the south, in the land of Israel, was a very fine farm. It was owned by a man named Nabal. The land was well kept and the harvests were great. Nabal had large flocks and herds. He had three thousand sheep and more than a thousand goats. His pastures reached as far as the eye could see, and he had to keep many shepherds out on the hills to watch over his sheep and his goats.

But Nabal was a bad man. He was stingy, and had a mean and sullen temper. Had it not been for Abigail, his beautiful wife, who was as generous as she was good, Nabal would have had a hard time getting anybody to work for him.

One day they were shearing the sheep on Nabal's farm. The shepherds were contented and merry. They knew that Abigail and her servants had made a feast for them and had prepared good things for them to eat and drink, so the sheep-shearing went merrily on.

Suddenly they looked up from their work and were surprised and startled at the sight which met their eyes. They saw ten men marching toward them, two by two, keeping step, just as soldiers march. They came swinging along the dusty road, headed by Abishai and Benaiah. They were a band of lusty, hardy outlaws, and they said they had come with a message from their captain, David.

"Peace be unto thee and to thy house," they said to Nabal, "and unto all thy great possessions. We have protected thy shepherds in the fields as they will

tell you. We have driven off the Amalekites who came to steal thy sheep. Remember us now, therefore, and send a gift to David, the son of Jesse."

Nabal became very angry. He lost his temper completely, and he said:

"And who is David? And who is the son of Jesse? David is but a servant who broke away from his master. There be many such in these days. Shall I then take my bread and my wine and the meat I have killed for my shearers and give it unto men whom I know not whence they be? Begone. I will give thee naught."

The men listened without saying a word till Nabal had finished. Then they turned silently and took their way back by the same road over which they had come. The shepherds who had paused in their sheep-shearing while the men and Nabal talked, watched them till they went out of sight over the hills. Then one of the shepherds slipped away and ran into the great house.

"Mistress Abigail," he whispered, "an evil thing has happened. A company of men were sent by David to salute our master and bring him greeting, but he railed upon them and sent them away empty. Thou knowest how good David and his men have been to your shepherds. We have never been hurt, neither have our sheep or goats been stolen since we have been in the fields. They have protected us by night and by day. Thou knowest how strong are David and his men. He will come and destroy us. What shall we do? Not one of us dares to speak to the master, Nabal."

Abigail knew that the shepherd was right, so she gathered together two hundred loaves of the bread they had made for the shepherds, and took two skin bottles of wine, five sheep which had been dressed for roasting, five baskets of parched corn, a hundred clusters of raisins and two hundred cans of figs. These she packed on the backs of the asses and said to her servants:

"Go on with these before me. I will follow after you."

Then without a word to Nabal, she went forth to meet David. When they reached the top of the hill they could see at the bottom a cloud of flying dust. It was David and his men. When the men had carried back Nabal's ugly words to David, he was very angry. He set forth with his men and now they were hastening with all speed to punish him.

When Abigail saw David, she alighted and bowed low before him.

"Let not my lord take notice of my husband," she said. "He is a wilful and foolish man. See, I have brought you a gift all that you can wish. Do not, therefore, shed blood without a cause. I know that my lord fights the battles of the Lord and does no evil. The Lord will surely make him victorious over all the land, and when it shall come to pass that my lord is ruler over Israel, he will then be glad that he has shed no blood in revenge or without cause."

David's anger was soothed when he saw this beautiful woman and heard her words. He knew that she spoke truly, so he said:

"Blessed be the Lord God of Israel who sent thee

this day to meet me. And blessed be thy advice, and blessed be thou who hast kept me this day from shedding blood and from avenging myself with my own hand. Except thou hadst come out to meet me, as the Lord God of Israel liveth, before the morning

ABIGAIL BRINGS A GIFT TO DAVID.

light both Nabal and all that belonged to him should have perished."

Abigail presented her gift and David accepted it. Then he said:

"I have hearkened to thy voice and have accepted thy gift. Return now, therefore, in peace to thy house."

Abigail and her servants went back home. David looked after them till they were out of sight. Then he and his men turned and went the other way. When Abigail reached the house, she found Nabal and the shepherds sitting down to the feast which had been prepared for them. They were eating and drinking and singing and making merry.

Now, Nabal, in addition to his ugly sullen temper, had another very bad fault. He drank too much wine. When Abigail came in she found her husband drunk. He was laughing and making merry after the foolish manner of drunken men, and she knew it would be useless to tell him then what she had done. But in the morning when he was sober again, she said to him:

"Your life was in great danger yesterday, and I saved you. David was on his way here with four hundred men to kill you and all of us. But I went to meet him, and I took him the gift you had denied him, and so he turned back."

Nabal was filled with terror when he heard what his wife had said. His fright and the liquor he had drunk brought on a sickness. He went to bed and never got up again. In ten days he was dead.

After Nabal was dead, David thought much about Abigail, his beautiful wife. His own wife, Michal, had been taken away from him by Saul, her father, and had been given to another man. Besides, it was the custom in those days for a man to have more than one wife if he wished. So David sent a messenger to

Abigail asking her to be his wife. She remembered his kindness to her when she had gone out to meet him. So she consented, and when David gave up his life as an outlaw and went to be king in Hebron, he took Abigail with him.

One day, while David was still leading the life of an outlaw, their band was attacked by the Philistines and they had a great fight. David looked out across the valley, over the heads of the struggling soldiers and he could see in the distance the green trees and the hills of Bethlehem, the little town where he was born. He was suddenly seized with homesickness. In the heat and the dust of the battle he became very thirsty, and he said, as though speaking to himself:

"O that some one would bring me a drink of water from the well by the gate in Bethlehem."

His nephew, Abishai, heard the words. He said nothing to David, but he got two other soldiers who loved David very much, and at the risk of their lives they broke through the Philistine lines, dodging their arrows and spears, until they came to Bethlehem.

David was deeply touched when they brought the water to him but when he learned at how great a sacrifice it had been obtained he would not drink. He looked sadly at the water he had so longed and thirsted for. Then silently he poured it out upon the ground.

QUESTIONS

Where did David go after he said good-by to Jonathan?

What did he become?

What do you suppose he thought of while he was wandering in the wilderness?

Did not Saul have some reason for being jealous of David?

Where was the Ark of the Lord being kept?

When David came to the house of the chief-priest what did he ask for?

What was the name of the king's chief herdsman at Nob?

What did he do when he saw that David had been given the shew-bread and the sword of Goliath?

What did Saul do when Doeg told him what had happened?

Where did David go after the slaughter of the priests at Nob?

Where did he take his father and mother for safety?

Where did he take refuge himself?

What did David and his band do for the shepherds while they were in the wilderness?

Who was the most prosperous farmer in the neighborhood?

What happened on the day of the sheep-shearing at Nabal's farm?

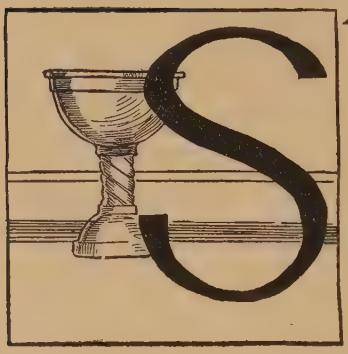
What became of Abigail after Nabal's death?

What was the wish which David made during the battle?

When his nephew heard of it what did he do?

THE ELEVENTH STORY

A KING WHO FAILED



AUL was greatly troubled. The warning which he had received from Samuel after the battle had made a great impression upon him. As the king grew older and his madness and melancholy increased, he began to forget how much he owed to Samuel. He thought that he had become so great a king that he needed no longer to be guided by Samuel's words. Now he had learned his mistake. Without Samuel's support and counsel, Saul was powerless. His heart was heavy. There was no longer a divine voice to advise and cheer him. He was filled with gloom, and not long after this, he had a second warning.

Samuel came to him once more and said:

"Hearken thou unto the voice of the Lord who sayeth: 'I have marked that which Amalek did to Israel, how he set himself against him when he came out of Egypt.' Go, therefore, and smite Amalek. Destroy utterly all that they have. Let not man nor woman, infant or youth, ox or sheep or camel be spared."

We are not able to understand such commands as these. It is not easy for us to see why the Lord should wish the utter destruction of the Amalekites. Perhaps it was only His plan to test Saul—to learn his willingness or unwillingness to obey without question. But whether it was the unhappy condition of Saul's mind, or whether it was because he thought that so great a king as he could do as he pleased,—who can say? Saul disobeyed once more the voice of the Lord which spoke through Samuel. He made war upon the Amalekites, as Samuel had commanded him, but instead of destroying them, he captured Agag, their king, and brought him alive to their own country. He took also the best of the sheep and the oxen and the lambs and all that was good and brought them back for himself and his servants.

It was not long till word of all this was brought to Samuel. He was both angry and grieved, for he loved Saul and he knew that this last act of disobedience would cost him his kingdom. He prayed to the Lord all night and then set out to seek Saul.

The king saw him coming and was afraid. Samuel felt very sorry for Saul, but he said:

"What meaneth the bleating of the sheep and the lowing of the oxen that I hear?"

And Saul replied:

"We brought them from the Amalekites. We spared the best of the sheep and the oxen that we might offer them up in sacrifice to the Lord."

Then said Samuel unto the king:

"Stay. I will tell thee what the Lord God hath said unto me this night."

Saul was silent, but at last he looked up and said: "Say on."

"Hear thou what the Lord hath said: 'Though thou wast little in thine own sight did I not make thee head of the tribes of Israel? Did I not make thee king? Did I not send thee on a journey and tell thee that thou shouldst utterly destroy the Amalekites? Wherefore hast thou not obeyed me? Wherefore didst thou bring back spoil for thine own use and do evil in my sight?' "

Saul tried to excuse himself? He told Samuel that he had taken Agag, the king, alive, and had put all the rest of the Amalekites to death. He said it was the soldiers, not himself, who had taken the sheep and the oxen and brought them back because they wished to make a sacrifice, and that he had not been able to restrain them. But Samuel looked Saul in the face and said sternly:

"Behold, to obey is better than sacrifice."

Then Samuel told him that because he had disobeyed the voice of the Lord, the Lord had rejected him. He had told Samuel to go forth and find another man who should be king in Saul's place. When Saul heard these words he fell at Samuel's feet and wept. He took hold of Samuel's robe when he went to depart and held it so tightly that it was torn. Then Samuel said:

"Thus hath the Lord rent the kingdom of Israel from thee this day."

Then said Saul:

"I have sinned. I disobeyed the Lord because I feared the people. But stay thou with me and par-

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SAUL ATTEMPTING TO KILL DAVID.

don my sins, and I will worship the Lord again. Honor me, I pray thee, before the people."

"Nay. I will not return to thee. Thou hast rejected the word of the Lord. He hath also rejected thee. Bring me hither Agag, king of the Amalekites."

Agag came to Samuel fearfully, saying, "Surely the bitterness of death is past." But Samuel replied:

"As thy sword hath made women childless, so shalt thy mother be childless among women."

Then Samuel killed Agag with his own hands and cut him in pieces in obedience to the Lord's command, and from that day forth, Saul knew that another king would reign over Israel in his place. But he did not know, as Samuel did, that David, the little shepherd of Bethlehem, whom Samuel had brought to Saul's court that he might while away the king's melancholy with his songs and his harp, was the man whom the Lord had chosen to be king.

Saul never saw Samuel again, but Samuel grieved for Saul whom he loved. After this, the illness and melancholy of the king, that once strong, energetic soldier, and military leader, became more pronounced. He began to realize that as a king he was a failure. Formerly, on the advice of his physicians, when he had been seized with these attacks, he had sent for David to come with his harp, and for a long time, David and his music had soothed him. But he grew jealous of David and had tried to kill him, and David had had to flee for his life. Saul pursued him, but every time he tried to do him harm, he failed. Once he came to the very cave where David was hiding. It

was dark and the king could not see. So close was he that David cut off a piece of the king's robe. When Saul learned of this he was ashamed, for he knew that David could have killed him if he had wished. He wept and said:

DAVID AND THE SLEEPING KING.

"Is this thy voice, my son, David?"

David said it was. And then the king said:

"Thou hast done good to me when I have done thee evil. The Lord reward thee. I know well that thou shalt one day be ruler over Israel."

Then he asked David to promise him that he would not kill his children, and David promised.

But Saul soon forgot David's kindness to him in the cave. He heard again where David was hiding and set out with his men to find and kill him. David heard that Saul had come, so one night he took one of his men and went down to Saul's camp. The king lay sleeping with his spear stuck in the ground beside him. The man who went with David wished to take the spear and kill the king, but David said:

"Wouldst thou raise thy hand against one whom the Lord has made king?"

While the king lay in a deep sleep, David took Saul's spear and went away. And when he came to the top of the hill, he shouted in a loud voice, and Abner, one of Saul's captains, came running.

"Why keep ye not better watch over the king?" said David. "See where his spear is."

Saul also was awakened and heard David's voice. He knew that David might have taken his life again if he had wished. Once more he wept and said as before:

"Is that thy voice, my son, David? I have sinned against thee. Come back, my son, David. I will not harm thee."

But David knew now that he could not trust to Saul's promises, for he had told him this before. So he took his men and went away. Not long after this, the Philistines arose again and made war upon Saul.

When the king saw the great army that had come to fight him, he prayed to the Lord to help him. But the Lord would not hearken to his prayer. The king did not know what to do next. Finally he thought of a fortune-teller, an old woman called the witch of En-

dor who was supposed to have the power to tell people the things which were to happen. In the olden times almost everybody believed in witches. Even wise men thought that these women had made a bargain with the Evil One and had sold their souls to him and had been given, in return, the power to see into the future, to destroy their enemies without touching them, and to talk with those who had been long dead. There are a great many wonderful and mysterious things in this world of ours, and in those days, men and women who possessed the powers which now we call telepathy and hypnotism were called wizards and witches. Yet the Evil One had no more to do with that power than he has to do with the wonderful things of our day, such as wireless telegraphy and electric light. Once there had been a great many of these people in Israel, but Saul had driven them all from the land. Now he disguised himself and took two men with him and went at night to see the witch of Endor. And when he had come to the cave he said to her:

"I pray thee, call up the man whom I shall name to thee."

The old woman said to him:

"Thou knowest that Saul hath cut us off and driven us out of the land. Art thou come to lay a snare for me?"

"As the Lord liveth, no punishment shall come to thee for this thing," said Saul.

"Whom then shall I call unto thee?"

"Bring me up Samuel," said the King.

When the woman saw Samuel, she cried with a loud voice and said:

"Thou hast deceived me. Thou art Saul, the king."
Then Samuel spoke to Saul, saying:
"Why hast thou disquieted me to bring me here?"
"I am sore distressed," answered Saul. "The Philis-

"CALL UP SAMUEL," SAID THE KING.

tines make war against me. The Lord is departed from me. He answereth me no more. Therefore have I called thee. Make known to me what I shall do."

We can not help feeling very sorry for Saul when

we read these words. They were the last, despairing cry of a poor, unhappy, old man who once had been an honored King.

Then Samuel said:

"The Lord hath done unto thee as I told thee he would. Thou shalt be king no longer because thou hast not served Him. David will be King. The Lord will give the victory to the Philistines to-morrow, and thou and thy sons shall be with me among the dead."

Saul fell upon his face. All his strength left him for he had not tasted food that day. The old woman raised him up and begged him to eat. At first he refused to touch it, but at last he took the food she brought.

On the next day it was as Samuel had said. In the battle Saul's sons were slain, among them Jonathan, David's dear friend. The Philistines followed hard upon Saul and his sons, and the battle went against them. Nearly all the soldiers fled, but although they were forsaken by their warriors, Saul and his sons and his armor-bearer refused to flee. After all his sons were dead, the archers overtook Saul and he was badly wounded. He called to his faithful armor-bearer and said:

"I pray thee, draw thy sword and put me to death lest I fall into the hands of the Philistines. That would be worse than death."

But the armor-bearer did not dare to kill the king. Besides, he loved Saul and had fought with him in many battles. He could not bear to kill his master. But the Philistines pressed closer and closer and Saul

took his own sword, set it on the ground with the point upward and fell upon it. So he died.

When the armor-bearer saw that Saul was dead, he followed his example. He fell upon his sword also and died. All had come to pass that Samuel had told Saul. The Philistines had won the day, and after the army of Israel had fled, they cut off the head of Saul and laid his body and those of his sons on the wall of Bethshan.

A good many years before, in the beginning of Saul's reign, he had delivered the people of Gilead from the Philistines. Now when they heard that the king was dead and that his body still lay exposed on the wall, the men of Gilead stole out, under cover of darkness, took the bodies of the king and his sons and burned them. Then they laid their ashes in a grave beneath a tree in Jabesh.

It is difficult to estimate truly the character of King Saul. We find it hard to excuse self-will, anger, jealousy and hatred in a king. No man can control others who does not first control himself. Yet we remember that these things may have been due to illness, and if so, then the king should be judged with pity. His last years and his death are all the more tragic because we have allowed his faults to obscure what was true and noble in his nature.

QUESTIONS

What did Saul do after Samuel had warned him that he would lose his crown if he did not obey him?

When Samuel came again what did he tell Saul to do?

In what way did the king disobey this time?

What did Samuel do when he heard of it?

What excuse did Saul make to Samuel?

What took place when the king came to the cave where David was hiding?

What did Saul say when he found that David had not harmed him?

Did Saul keep the promise he had made to David?

What happened the next time the king fell into David's power?

What did David carry away from Saul's camp when he found the king asleep?

When Saul saw the great army of Philistines which had come to fight him what did he do?

Whom did he ask the Witch of Endor to call up for him?

What did Samuel tell him when he came?

Who were killed in the battle next day?

When Saul found that he was so badly wounded what did he do?

What did the Philistines do with the bodies of Saul and Jonathan?

When the men of Gilead heard of the death of Saul and Jonathan, what did they do?

Which was the nobler man, Saul or Jonathan?

Was Saul really a great king?

THE TWELFTH STORY

A KING OF JUDAH

OW the battle was over. Saul and Jonathan were dead. The soldiers of Israel had fled for their lives and the Philistines were lords of the land. They sent news of their great victory to all of their cities which lay along the sea-coast, and when the army returned home, the streets of every city were lined with women and girls, singing and rejoicing. "Now," they thought, "the Israelites will be our slaves. They will return no more to fight us." So they shouted and welcomed their soldiers home, but in their rejoicing they forgot all about David.

When David heard that Saul, and Jonathan, his own dear friend, were dead, he mourned and lamented for them. He poured forth his grief and sorrow in music. The dirge which David composed for Saul and Jonathan is one of the finest songs in all literature. He played on his harp and sang it:

Thy glory, O Israel, is slain, upon thy high places! How are the mighty fallen!

Saul and Jonathan were lovely and pleasant in their lives,
And in death they were not divided.
They were swifter than the eagles; they were stronger than lions.
How are the mighty fallen in the midst of the battle!
Jonathan is slain upon thy high places.
I am distressed for thee, my brother Jonathan:
Very pleasant hast thou been unto me.
Thy love to me was wonderful, passing the love of women.
How are the mighty fallen! And the weapons of war perished!

Now, although the Philistines had won the battle and had become lords of the land, and although the army of Israel had scattered after the death of the king, David had gathered about him a band of loyal knights. They were strong, courageous men, well able to handle the sword and the spear and the shield. Day by day, the number of these men increased. One by one the soldiers of Israel came back to enlist under David's banner and to fight with him.

The young man who had carried the news of Saul's death to David knew very well that the king had not been a friend to David, so he hoped that he would receive some reward for the news he brought. He told David how badly wounded the king had been, how he wished to die rather than fall into the hands of his enemies, and that finally, he had asked him to kill him and he had done so. But instead of the reward he had hoped for, David said:

"You have slain the king of Israel, the anointed of the Lord, and you shall die for your sin."

David asked of the Lord whether he should go back into the land of Israel and the Lord told him he should go back, to the city of Hebron. So David took his two wives, Ahinoam and Abigail (for Michal, the daughter of Saul, had been taken from him by her father and given to another man) and all the men who had gathered about him and went to Hebron. When David arrived there, the men of Judah came to him and anointed him king over their tribe—the tribe of Judah.

When David learned of the act of the people of Jabesh in Gilead—how they had stolen out in the dark night and had brought the bodies of Saul and Jonathan and buried their ashes, he said to them:

"May you be forever blest of the Lord because you have done this thing. And I will also do good unto you because you have shown kindness to my lord Saul and my dear friend Jonathan. Let us be friends, for Saul is dead and the tribe of Judah hath chosen me king over them."

Now, Abner, who was Saul's nephew and the captain of his army, had taken Esh-baal, Saul's son, and had brought him over to Mahanaim. Here he declared him king over Israel, but the tribe of Judah remained loyal to David and would not have Esh-baal for their king. One day, down in Hebron, David's warriors raised a great shout. They clashed their swords together and cried out:

"Long live King David!"

They determined to have a great feast, and all the

people for miles around came flocking to Hebron. They came on camels and on mules and on oxen, bringing bread and meat and cakes, wine, figs, raisins, oil and sheep and everything that was good to eat. And they had their feast and declared that they would have David and none other for their king.

So Abner brought the soldiers of Esh-baal to make war upon the tribe of Judah. Joab, David's captain took David's army and met them at the Pool of Gibeon. The two armies drew up and pitched their tents so near each other that only the Pool was between them. Then Abner sent a message to Joab saying:

"Let us not set the whole of the two armies in array against each other and kill a thousand soldiers in a needless battle. Let us have a tournament, and fight by champions. Choose you twelve of the best men of your army and we will do the same and they shall decide between us."

Joab agreed to this and the men were chosen. They came out in all their glittering armor, twelve on each side. The two armies watched in great excitement, each ready to cheer on its own defenders. The signal was given and they fell to fighting. Each man siezed his opponent by the head with his left hand and then with his right hand thrust his sharp sword into his body. They all fell together. Not one of the twenty-four ever got up again. Neither had won, and when the soldiers of the two armies saw the fate of their companions, they fell upon each other in battle. In the fight which followed, Abner and his army were badly beaten and had to run for their lives.

In David's army were his three nephews, the sons

of his sister, Zeruiah. One of these nephews was Joab, who was the captain. Another was Abishai. Perhaps you will remember something about Abishai. It was he who went with David when he slipped by night into Saul's camp and found the king asleep with his long spear stuck in the ground beside him. And Abishai had said to David:

"Shall I not kill him with his own spear?"

"Nay," said David. "Do not raise thine hand against the Lord's anointed."

So they went away as quietly as they had come and David was content to carry away the king's spear so that he should know he had been near and had refused to harm him.

The third of the nephews was Asahel. He was the youngest of Zeruiah's children. He was strong and handsome and hardy and fleet of foot.

When Abner's army started to run, Asahel thought that if he could only capture Abner, the captain, himself, it would be a great thing. So he paid no attention to the other soldiers but ran after Abner. Abner heard the sound of footsteps behind him and looking back saw that it was Asahel pursuing him.

"Is that you, Asahel?" he asked.

"It is I."

"You have no armor on," said Abner. "Seize one of the soldiers and take his and arm thyself."

"I am well armed enough to kill you, Abner," was Asahel's reply.

So they ran on and on.

"Come," said Abner. "Cease pursuing me. Why should I smite thee to the ground? How then could

I ever look thy brother Joab in the face again? Go back and be satisfied."

But Asahel did not heed him. He grasped his sword all the more firmly and sped on after Abner. At last, just as he was about to overtake him, Abner seized his long spear and thrust it through Asahel's body. The soldiers who had been following after them reached the place, and there lay Asahel dead upon the ground. They broke into loud cries when they saw him, and none wished to carry back the news to David that Asahel was dead.

Joab and Abishai ran on, pursuing Abner, but finally he climbed a high hill from which he could look down on them and from which he might perhaps kill them if they came too close. Abner called out to them:

"How long will it be before you call back the people from pursuing thy kinsmen? Do you not know that the end will be bitterness? Shall the sword devour forever?"

Joab replied:

"As the Lord liveth, if you had not spoken, then assuredly not until morning would the people have ceased each from pursuing their brother."

Then Joab blew his trumpet and all the people stood still. They pursued after the army of Esh-baal no more, but Abner and his men marched all through the long night. When morning came they were far across the plain and the river Jordan rolled between them and the army of David. Joab returned to camp and told David of his young brother's death. Then he took a few soldiers with him and they carried

Asahel's body and buried it in the same grave with his father in Bethlehem. They, too, marched all night, for when the morning dawned upon them, they were back in Hebron.

Abner returned to Mahanaim, where Esh-baal was still trying to be king, and although he had fought and almost lost his life for him, they had a great quarrel and at last Abner said:

"I am done. From this hour I fight for you no more. I will make David king over all Israel."

So he gathered about him twenty valiant warriors as a body-guard and set forth to seek David at Hebron. And when he had come to Hebron he sent a messenger to David saying:

"Make peace with me, and I will make thee king over all Israel. I will forsake Esh-baal and will bring all my army to aid thee."

David said to the messenger:

"Go tell your master, Abner, that I will make peace with him, but one thing I demand of him before I will see his face. He shall bring me back my wife Michal, Saul's daughter who was given me by Saul, the king, when I slew the hundred Philistines."

Abner went back to Esh-baal's court and took Michal away from the man to whom her father had given her after he took her from David, and when he returned to David at Hebron, Michal went with him. David made a great feast for Abner and the twenty men who had come with him, and when the feast was over, Abner said:

"I will arise and go. I will gather all Israel to my lord, the king, that they may make a covenant with

thee that thou mayst be king over all that thou desirest."

Then David said:

"Go in peace."

Abner departed to gather together his army and bring it to David. Just after he had gone, Joab came in from a long errand on which David had sent him on the day of the feast. He was not there to take part in it, and when he returned and found that David was willing to make peace with Abner, the captain of Esh-baal's army, who had tried to make Esh-baal king instead of David, he was filled with rage. Moreover, he hated him because he had killed his brother Asahel, and he determined to be revenged. So, learning which way Abner had gone, he sent a messenger after him. The messenger overtook Abner and his companions as they sat resting in the shade of a tree by a well.

"Whence come ye?" they asked.

"From David," they replied, not telling the truth. "He wishes you to return."

So Abner, not suspecting anything, rose and went with them back to Hebron. When they reached the city gate, there was Joab waiting, and he spoke to Abner and said:

"Come hither, Abner. I would have a word with you."

Abner followed Joab as he led the way into the woods, and when the two captains had reached a quiet spot where they were quite alone, Joab suddenly drew his sword and slew Abner before he could defend himself. The messenger whom Joab had sent after Abner then ran swiftly back to the king bearing the

dreadful news that the man who had come to him in friendship and with the promise of assistance had been killed by his captain. David was distressed when he heard this bad news, and he said:

"I and my kingdom are forever guiltless before the Lord of the death of Abner, the son of Ner."

And he made a great funeral for Abner and wept and lamented over him. He called all the people together and the king himself walked behind the body of the dead captain as they bore him to his grave. And he sang a dirge for him, as he had done for Saul and Jonathan. And David fasted, and when the people urged him to eat he said:

"Know you not that a prince and a great man has fallen this day in Israel?"

When the people saw all this they were pleased, for they knew that David had had nothing to do with Abner's death.

When the news was brought to Esh-baal that Abner had deserted him and had gone over to David and that he had been killed by Joab in Hebron, he gave up all hope of ever being king over Israel. He knew how powerful David and his army had become and that it was useless to fight them any longer.

One day when he had fallen asleep and the servant who guarded the door had become drowsy and slept also, two men crept past and came into the room where the king lay. When they came out, they carried the bleeding head of Esh-baal in their hands. He had lost both his life and his kingdom, and as if that were not enough, history has even changed his name. Saul, his father, had called his Esh-baal, Man of God.

But history has called him Ishbosheth, Man of Shame.

The men who carried Esh-baal's head journeyed all night to bring it to David in Hebron. When they came to the king they said:

"Behold, here is the head of Esh-baal, the son of Saul, your enemy, who sought your life. The Lord hath this day avenged my lord, the king, on Saul and his descendants."

But if they hoped to be rewarded they were much mistaken. David reminded them of the fate of the man who had brought him the news of Saul's death, and he said:

"How much more wicked you are than he was. You have slain a righteous man in his own house as he lay in his own bed. Now you shall be destroyed from the earth."

He called his soldiers and the men were put to death. Their hands and feet were cut off and they were hanged beside the Pool. But David gave orders that Esh-baal's head should be carried to Hebron and buried in the same grave with Abner.

After Esh-baal was dead, all the men of Israel and of Judah rallied around David.

QUESTIONS

What did David do when he heard that Saul and Jonathan were dead?

What did the messenger think who brought the news of their death to David?

What did David say to him?

Where did David go after the death of Saul?

What tribe did he find there?

What word did he send to the people of Gilead who had buried the king and his son?

Who was Abner, and what was he doing at this time?

Where was David made king and what tribe did he rule over?

What happened when Abner came and brought Esh-baal's army to make war upon him?

How was the contest to be made?

What occurred when the champions went out to fight each other?

Who were David's three nephews?

What had Abishai helped David to do once before?

When Abner's army started to run what did the youngest nephew do?

How was Asahel slain?

Did Abner and the others make peace after his death?

What happened after Abner returned home?

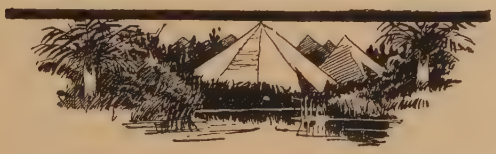
What did David do when Abner and his escort came back to Hebron?

Where had Joab been on the day of the feast?

What did he do when he returned and found that David had made peace with Abner?

In what manner did Esh-baal die?

What did David do to the messengers who brought him the news of Esh-baal's death?



THE THIRTEENTH STORY

THE CITY ON THE HILL

HEN David had come to Ziklag, where he learned the tragic news of the death of Saul and Jonathan in battle with the Philistines, a man came running to him one day, with his clothes all torn and his head covered with dust. He bowed low before David, the King, and said to him:

"Behold, I was on Mount Gilboa in the battle. Saul was hard pressed by his enemies, and when he saw me, he called me to him. 'Slay me,' he commanded, 'lest I fall into the hands of the Philistines.' I did as he requested. I slew the King, and I have brought to you his royal bracelet and his crown."

Now, this was not true. Saul had slain himself, and this soldier, prowling around on the battle-field had come upon the dead body of the King which had not yet been discovered by the Philistines. It was covered with blood and the grime of battle, but the soldier's sharp eyes saw the gleam of Saul's crown and the bracelet on his arm. He knew how long David had been hunted by the unfortunate king and thought his story would bring him a rich reward.

So all the time that Abner was fighting to make Esh-baal king, David had Saul's crown at Hebron. But of what use is a crown to a man unless he can wear it? Having a crown in one's possession does not mean anything. The man who makes a crown has it while he works on it. The man who cares for a crown has it while he polishes it and keeps it bright and shining. The chief value of a crown is to have the right to wear it, and that depends not on a man himself but on the people over whom he wishes to reign. Some thought David the rightful king. Others thought Esh-baal, Saul's son, should reign.

But now both Esh-baal and Abner were dead and David had been made king over all Israel. There was in the midst of that country, a great, high hill. On the top of this hill was a mighty fortress, and within the fortress a city. This city was called the City of Peace, because the men who held the fortress believed it to be so strong that no one could touch it. There were deep valleys on three sides of the hill, and on the fourth side were cliffs, smooth like the walls of a mountain. The Philistines and the Israelites had in turn conquered the land, yet neither had ever been able to take the fortress on the hill. It looked down in defiance on all the earth beneath it. The men who held the fortress were called Jebusites. They had received it from their fathers, and they, in turn, had received it from theirs.

David determined that if he were to be king of all Israel, he would have to take this fortress. So he decided to attack it, but when he called upon the garrison to surrender, they laughed at him and said:

"If you wish to get our fortress, come and take it. We will not put a single soldier on guard, for though our men were all blind and lame, they could still hold these walls against you."

Then they laughed again, and in their contempt placed a company of men at the gate. Part of the men were blind and part were lame, and they said scornfully:

"The blind watch for your coming! The lame shall bring us news of your approach!"

Then they all sat down to eat and drink. David called his knights and warriors together and said:

"Here is a chance for some man to receive this day a rich reward. He who shall find a way into the City of Peace, and shall be first to enter there, shall be my chief and the captain of my army."

So the soldiers went their ways, each seeking some means by which he could get within that mighty fortress and into the city which lay behind it. It was Joab who finally accomplished it. He followed a little stream and found a secret passage leading into the city. He climbed the wall, and one after another, David's warriors came climbing after him. The soldiers who guarded the fortress, in their confidence that no one could do this, found themselves unprepared for the attack. The army of David won the day and the place. David kept his promise. Joab became captain of the army, and Jerusalem, the city guarded by the fortress on the hill, was no longer called the City of Peace. It became the City of David.

When the Philistines saw that David's army had

captured Jerusalem, they thought they would try to take it from them. So they gathered together a great army in the Valley of the Giants. They brought with them the images of their gods, thinking they would fight all the better. When David heard that the Philistines were coming he said unto the Lord:

"Shall I go up against the Philistines? And wilt thou deliver them this day into my hands?"

And the voice of the Lord replied:

"Go. I will deliver them into thy hands."

Then David's soldiers poured in upon the Philistines as a great flood would pour over the land. They broke and ran and left their idols behind them, but they returned, and David once more asked of the Lord, "Shall I go forth against them?"

Then the Lord told David to take his stand by the mulberry trees, and when he heard from the tops of the trees the sound of marching, he should fall upon them in battle. David did this. The Philistines came on and on, and David and his men lay in wait by the trees. When the leaves stirred in the tree-tops, they rushed out upon the enemy as a great storm breaks over the forest. Away the Philistines fled, pell-mell, and never more did they return to trouble the people of Israel. The long war which had been going on for so many years between them was ended at last. The Philistines were lords of the land no more.

David wore the crown of all Israel at last. Joab was his captain. Jerusalem was his capital. There he established his court. He was the supreme judge of the nation. The people brought their quarrels and

difficult questions to him to be settled, as they had once done to Moses. Israel became a great nation while David was king.

After David became king and moved his capital to Jerusalem, his first thought was to bring to the city the Ark of the Lord. The Ark had stood in a tabernacle, or tent, for seventy years. Now it was David's dearest wish that it should be brought to Jerusalem. We learn from the Psalms that the thought of bringing the Ark to Jerusalem cost David many a sleepless night. It would be a great day for Israel when the Ark was once more among them. It would be a sign that they had renewed their covenant with God and had pledged their loyalty to Him. Whatever may have been David's faults, he was always a deeply religious man. He never lost faith in the ancient belief of his people that no matter how many earthly kings they might have, the Lord was still ruler over Israel.

So David called together an assembly of the people. They came from both north and south, and with the king himself at the head, they set forth on their great mission. All these years the Ark had been in a house where it had been left after the people had been so heavily visited by famine and the plague. Now it was to be brought to Jerusalem, the City of David.

Of course you have not forgotten what the Ark was —the wooden box, or chest, overlaid with silver and gold, with rings in each end, through which a pole could be passed so that it could be carried by two men without their touching it with their hands. Inside the chest were two great, heavy, flat stones, and on

these were written the Ten Commandments, five on each stone. The very last thing which Moses did before he went up into the mountain to get the Ten Commandments was to make this chest, and the first thing he did when he got to the foot of the hill again was to put them into it.

After that the children of Israel had carried the Ark with them everywhere they went. If they pitched their tents on the great desert, they made a place in their midst for the Ark. When they took up the march again, the men who carried the Ark were always the first to go. Once they were crossing the Jordan. The men who carried the Ark went into the middle of the stream and stood there holding it till all the army had crossed over. When they attacked Jericho, they carried the Ark around the city till the walls fell. The Ark was to the army of Israel what our flag and banners are to our army, and like the flags and banners, the more battered and tattered and torn and grimy and battle-stained it became, the more they loved it. The Ark showed the marks of many a conflict, but they valued it all the more for that. It was the most precious thing they had.

Once they had lost the battle and the Ark as well. The Philistines captured it and carried it off, but every city to which they took it was visited by mice and the plague till they finally sent it back with five gold mice on the cover. For a long time afterward it remained in a house on a high hill, in a wood where the Philistines had left it. Now David was king, and he determined to bring the Ark to Jerusalem.

They had a great procession. The two sons of

Abinadab, at whose house the Ark had been all this time, made a new cart and hitched two steady oxen to it. Then they placed the Ark upon it and started on their journey. One of the sons, Ahio, led the oxen. The other, Uzzah, walked beside the Ark. David was there with the priests and the princes of his court, and there was music and rejoicing as they went along. As they took their way over the hills and through the woods and between the fields, the shepherds and the woodsmen and the reapers left their work and ran to see the sight. And the streets of every little town along the way toward Jerusalem were lined with people.

But they had an accident. As they drew near to Jerusalem they came to a bad place in the road near an old building. The place had once been a threshing-floor. It was a wide, flat place on a hill. The wind blew across it, and that made it a good place to thresh the grain, because the wind blew away the chaff. As they were going by the place on this day, the oxen stumbled, and in another moment the Ark would have fallen from the cart to the ground. Uzzah put out his hand to stop it, but as soon as he touched it, he fell dead.

There was a sudden end to the music and rejoicing. The procession halted and the songs were turned to mourning. David feared to take the Ark on into the city, for he thought the death of Uzzah foretold some greater disaster. So they all went home, and the Ark was left at a house near by for three months longer.

But the days went on and nothing happened, so David went out once more to bring the Ark into

Jerusalem. There was another procession, only this time the Ark was carried by means of poles on men's shoulders, and everyone laughed and danced and sang as before, even David himself. They climbed the great, high hill on top of which was the city, and the Ark of God was set at last in its appointed place. A

BRINGING THE ARK TO JERUSALEM.

great feast was spread, and to each man and each woman who came, David gave a loaf of bread and some meat and a jug of wine to take home.

But one thing happened to mar the pleasure of the

day. As the procession moved along, Michal, David's wife looked out and saw David dancing and rejoicing with the rest. When he had finished sacrificing the burnt offerings and had blessed the people in the name of the Lord, and had distributed the bread and the wine, David returned home. Michal said to him scornfully:

"How glorious was the king of all Israel when he went dancing along the streets before the servants like some shameless fellow!"

"It was before the Lord that I danced," said David, "not before the servants or the people."

But Michal despised him and told him so. They had a bitter quarrel, for since the death of Saul and Jonathan and the murder of Esh-baal, her last brother, and the triumph of David over all her family, Michal had hated her husband. So there was sorrow in the midst of David's joy.

After the Ark had been brought to Jerusalem, David wished to build a temple in which it should be kept. But the Lord spoke unto him through Nathan, the prophet, saying:

"Not thou, but thy son, shall build me an house."

So the Ark remained where it had been placed during all David's life-time. Jerusalem became the City of the Lord, and the hill on which it stood was forever after called the Holy Hill.

QUESTIONS

When the messenger came to bring the news of Saul's death to David what else did he bring?

Why could not David wear the crown then?

Who owned the fortress on the top of the high hill?

What was the city called?

What did the people in the fortress do when David called upon them to surrender?

Who was first to find his way into the City of Peace?

What did David promise to him who should do this?

How had Joab found the way into the fortress?

When the Philistines heard that David had captured Jerusalem what did they do?

What was the first thing David thought of after he made his capital at Jerusalem?

Why did the Children of Israel wish to take the Ark with them wherever they went?

Where had the Ark been kept all this time?

In what manner was it to be moved?

What happened to the Ark as they were nearing Jerusalem?

Did David make another attempt to bring the Ark into the city?

Did anything happen to mar the pleasure of the day?

What did David wish to do after he had brought the Ark to Jerusalem?

What was the name given to the hill on which the city stood after the Ark was brought?

THE FOURTEENTH STORY

THE LITTLE LAME PRINCE

VERY beautiful is the story of the little lame prince. He was a dear little fellow, only five years old, the grandson of King Saul. His father was Jonathan, Saul's son, who, as you will remember, was the bosom friend of David. One day Jonathan and Saul, the king, were away from home fighting against the Philistines, and the little prince, whose name was Merib-baal, was at home with his nurse playing just as happily as though there were no such dreadful things on earth as war and fighting. His nurse was with him, for of course some one must see that no harm came to the little grandson of the king. She loved the little fellow and was good to him, yet it was her fault that he became lame.

While Merib-baal was playing with the nurse this morning, a messenger came running into the house. His clothes were torn, and he had dust on his head.

"What is the matter?" cried out the nurse when she saw him. "Do you come from the army?"

"Alas, yes," he replied, "and woe unto us! The Philistines have won the day. King Saul is dead. Jonathan has fallen in battle. All is lost. Take the little prince and flee for your lives."

The nurse was a good, faithful creature. She knew that her first duty was to save the prince. So with no thought for herself, she gathered him up in her arms, set him on her shoulder and ran for their lives. All would have gone well had she not stumbled and fallen. In the haste and confusion, and in her fright she had not looked well where she was going. The little boy fell with her, and when they picked him up, both his ankles were broken. No doctor could be found to set the broken bones, and the poor little prince was never able to walk again.

The nurse carried him safely out of the reach of the Philistines, but his condition was pitiable. His mother was dead. His home had been destroyed. His good father, Jonathan, had been killed in battle. Even his grandfather Saul was dead. He was a helpless little child of five who would never walk again and had no splendid future ahead of him.

When the nurse had fled with him, she had taken him across the Jordan to Lodebar, which lies among the mountains of Gilead. There was a good man living here whose name was Machir. He had a fine farm, and several strong, healthy sons. Machir gave Meribaal a home and he grew up on this farm. He became interested in the sheep and the cows, and in watching the men as they gathered the grapes and harvested the grain and the women as they made the butter and cheese. But he was very sorrowful when he looked at Machir's strong sons. He could only sit and watch. He could not handle the scythe nor the flail. All he could do was to use his hands. He shelled the beans and tended the churn. After a while, though, he grew

a little stronger, strong enough to learn to ride on an ass, and then he drove the cows to and from the pastures. But he wished he could work on the farm like the other boys and he would often look down at his poor, useless, broken feet and say:

"How good for nothing I am! How miserable! How sad it is to be lame!"

Things were not quite so bad, though, after he got able to ride. Sometimes he rode as far as Mahanaim where his uncle, Esh-baal, was trying to be king in place of his grandfather. O, how he wished he could be a soldier and fight for the kingdom himself! Although he had been only a small child when his father died, he could remember being told by Jonathan that his name, Merib-baal, meant "A Hero of the Lord," and that his little son must grow up to be a hero and a soldier like his father. Then he looked again at his helpless feet and wept, for he knew that his uncle Esh-baal's army was all the time growing weaker and that of David was becoming stronger and stronger. Finally the dreadful news was brought by a messenger that Esh-baal had been murdered in his bed and that there was none other of the family of Saul to reign. This was indeed sad news to Merib-baal, for although he knew he could never be a soldier (and it was necessary for a king to be a soldier in those days) he had always hoped that he might be able at least to leave the farm one day and be a prince again. But when Esh-baal died, all the little prince's property was lost. So now, in addition to being lame, he was also very poor.

And then something else happened. A terrible

disease broke out among the people. By hundreds and thousands they grew sick and died. They thought that God was punishing them for some of the evil things they had done, and they tried to think what they were. They remembered when Achan stole the wedge of gold, and the things which Saul had done to the Gibeonites who were descended from the men who brought the mouldy bread to Joshua and with whom Joshua had made a treaty of peace forever. Saul had broken the treaty. He had fallen upon the Gibeonites and tried to destroy them. Of course all this had happened years ago, but it might be that the Lord had awaited this time to visit His wrath upon them. It was the only thing they could think of. So David sent for some of the Gibeonites and said to them:

"What shall I do for you that the Lord may take away this plague from us? Shall I give you gold and silver?"

"Nay. We want neither gold nor silver. We want revenge."

"On whom do you want revenge?"

"On Saul who killed our brothers. Give us seven of Saul's grandsons. We will hang them."

David was very sad. He remembered that he had promised Saul that he would not kill his children, but he felt that he must keep his word and do anything he could do to stop the death of the people. But he could not forget Jonathan, his dear, dead friend. His mind went back to the days when they were boys together, when he had slain Goliath, and Jonathan had given him his sword and his robe and girdle. Then he remembered what a staunch friend Jonathan had been

to him when the King had determined to kill him—how he had first warned him of Saul's anger and had then helped him to get away. But the thing he remembered best of all was what Jonathan had said to him when they parted for the last time.

"When I am gone, David," he said, "and you are king over Israel, for the sake of our love for each other, be kind to my sons."

David had solemnly promised that he would do this, and now he remembered his promise. The little, lame prince hidden away in the mountains was greatly frightened when he heard of the demand of the Gibeonites. But Machir proved a good friend and kept him out of sight of the searchers until they had found seven other grandsons of Saul. They took them and hanged them, and after they had satisfied their desire for revenge, David called his steward Ziba to him and said:

"Is there no son of Jonathan to whom I may be a friend?"

He was told that Merib-baal was still at Lodebar at Machir's farm, so he sent some men whom he could trust to get the young prince and bring him to his court. When Merib-baal, sitting helpless, looked up and saw David's men coming toward him, he was terribly frightened, but they told him the king wanted to be kind to him because he had loved his father.

So Merib-baal went with them to David's court. The king restored to him all the lands which had belonged to Jonathan and Saul, and as Merib-baal was young, he appointed Ziba, who had been his own steward, to manage Merib-baal's property for him.

But alas for Merib-baal! Ziba was not an honest man. He had been once a servant of Saul, and after the king was dead, he had attached himself to David. He had become very rich. He lived at Jerusalem and had fifteen sons and twenty servants of his own. He was a rascal and a traitor. He had known all along that Merib-baal, the son of Jonathan, was living at Machir's farm in Lodebar. It was he who had answered David's question as to whether there was not a son of Jonathan somewhere to whom he could be kind. He had gone with those who were sent to Lodebar to bring the young prince back, and when they arrived, he led Merib-baal into the presence of the king. David told Merib-baal that because Ziba was so faithful, he had made him his guardian. He did not know then how false he was.

The years went by. Merib-baal had been very happy at David's court, but after he became a man, Absalom, David's ungrateful son, began making his father a great deal of trouble. He wanted to be king himself and the people were divided. Some took the part of David, some the part of Absalom. At last David was driven from his throne and had to flee from Jerusalem with only a few faithful friends, who would not forsake him.

Of course David had counted on Merib-baal being faithful to him after all his kindness to him. When he looked about him as they were fleeing from the city and did not see him, he called Ziba to him and said:

"Where is Merib-baal?"

Ziba was very busy. He had two asses saddled and

ready to ride, and he had brought two hundred loaves of bread, a hundred bunches of raisins, a hundred cakes of preserved fruit and a skin of wine. When the king saw these things he asked again:

"What are these things for? And where is Merib-baal?"

"The ass is for the king to ride," said Ziba. "The bread and fruit are for the king's household to eat. The wine is for those who are faint in the wilderness to drink."

"And where is Merib-baal?" asked David once more.

"Grieve not, O king," answered Ziba. "Merib-baal is in his house in Jerusalem. He is false to thee. He is with friends of Absalom. He says to himself: 'Am not I the grandson of Saul? Am not I the rightful heir to the throne of Israel? David took my father's crown. Now I will be king.' "

Then said David to Ziba:

"All that I gave to Merib-baal I now take back and give to thee."

Ziba bowed to the ground and said: "Thank you, my lord and king," and he left David and returned at once to take possession of Merib-baal's lands which the king had given him.

David was very sad. He could not have believed that Merib-baal would be false to him. He had counted on his friendship and he was never in such need of friends. He cried out:

"Mine own familiar friend in whom I trusted hath lifted his heel against me."

But after the battle in which Absalom was killed, David returned to Jerusalem. The people came flock-

ing about him again and Ziba was first to greet him. He met David at the banks of the Jordan with his fifteen sons and his twenty servants. They did all they could to help the king and his household across the river and to do everything in such a manner that it would please the king. But David's heart was heavy in the midst of the rejoicing. He could not forget Merib-baal.

MERIB-BAAL, THE LITTLE LAME PRINCE.

They crossed the river and went on into the city, and when they came to the city gate David halted. At the gate sat Merib-baal, and he was a sad sight. Since the king had been gone he had neither changed his clothes nor cut his hair nor cared for his poor, lame feet. And when David saw him, he knew at once that something was wrong and said:

"Why didst thou desert me, Merib-baal?"

"O my king," said Merib-baal, "I did not desert thee. Ziba has deceived us both. I said to him: 'Saddle me an ass, that I may go with the king. Bring me bread and fruit and wine that I may take them to the king.' He got the things as I had told him, but

when all was ready, he got upon the ass himself and rode away and I was helpless on account of my lame feet. He told you I was unfaithful. He has taken away my lands. I care not for that. I have been poor before and can be poor again. You have been good to me. You have saved my life. I have sat at your table. Believe what you will, O king, only do not believe that I was false to thee."

David was pleased to hear Merib-baal's words, but he was puzzled as to what to do about Ziba. Finally he said:

"You and Ziba may divide the lands between you."

"Nay, O king," said Merib-baal, "Let him have the lands. I care not for them now that thou hast come home again in safety and no longer believest me false."

But David has his way, and Merib-baal was given back half of the lands. He remained with David as long as he lived and was faithful to him always.

QUESTIONS

Who was the little lame prince?

How did it happen that he was lame?

Where did the nurse take the little prince after they fled from home?

What was the only thing Merib-baal could do to help with the work of the farm?

After the death of Esh-baal what occurred?

When David asked of the Gibeonites what he could do in order that the pestilence and the famine might be stayed, what did they say?

What did they demand of David?

What was the promise which David had made to Jonathan before his death?

How did it happen that Merib-baal was saved?

Who was sent by David to Machir's farm to bring him to Jerusalem?

Was Ziba an honest man?

What did Merib-baal do when he learned that David was fleeing from home?

In what manner did Ziba deceive him?

When David heard that Merib-baal was false what did he do?

But what happened when the king returned?

In what condition did David find Merib-baal?

What did David do when he found that Ziba had deceived both Merib-baal and himself?

Do you not think that Ziba deserved a worse punishment than he received from David for his treachery?

THE FIFTEENTH STORY

THE WAR OF AMBASSADORS' BEARDS

UESTIONS which give rise to war among nations are of many kinds. This is the story of a war which arose over the ambassadors' beards.

Over east of Jordan, among the mountains, there lived some people known as the Ammonites. When the children of Israel were passing through the wilderness they had come in conflict with them and they had been enemies ever since. Now there was a new king on the throne of Ammon. The old king was dead and his son reigned in his place.

King David thought that since the Ammonites were such near neighbors, it would be well to keep peace with them and be friends. They lived just across the river, so David chose some ambassadors, the oldest men of his court, who wore long beards, and sent them to the new Ammonite king with friendly words. These men were to congratulate the new king and ask him to forget the old quarrels they had had in the days of Jephthah. Saul had not treated the Ammonites very well, but David and the old king who had just died had been friends, and the ambassadors were to ask the new king that this friendship might continue. So the old men with the long beards set forth on their

errand and journeyed till they came to Rabbah, the royal city of the Ammonites.

But when the princes of the Ammonites saw them coming, they went to the new king and said:

"Put not your trust in David. He has not sent these messengers here to honor the memory of your father nor to make an honest agreement with you. He has sent them to spy out the weak places in our walls, and to find out how many men are in our army. When he has learned this, he will send his soldiers to make war upon us."

The king was young and had not reigned very long. So he heeded the advice of the men of his court, and when the messengers from David came, he treated them very badly. He cut off their long robes till they came only to their knees. Then he shaved off half of their beards, leaving each man with a beard on one side of his face and none on the other. Then he sent them home. In those days all men wore beards. It was a disgrace to be seen without one, and so ashamed were these poor old men that they hid themselves by day and traveled by night.

When they came to Jericho, however, they sent a message on ahead to King David to tell him what had happened. And David was very angry, of course, to think that a king would so deal with another king's messengers whom he had sent in good faith and with greetings. So he said to the messenger who had brought him this news:

"Tell the ambassadors to tarry at Jericho till their beards are grown."

Then he called his army about him and got ready

for war, and this war has always been known as the "War of the Ambassadors' Beards."

The new king of the Ammonites was very much frightened when he realized what he had done. They had not forgotten their neighbors, the Moabites,—how David, after he had conquered them had made them lie down in two long rows and had then killed all the men in one row and had left the others. They knew very well how powerful David's army was, and that if he made war upon them they would certainly be defeated. So they went to their neighbors, the Syrians, and offered them gold and silver if they would come and help them fight against David's army. The Syrians came, and when the army of David, with Joab as their leader, came up to attack the Ammonites at the city gate, the Syrians rushed out from their hiding-place and fell upon them. Joab was hemmed in between two armies. The Ammonites were in front, the Syrians were behind.

Joab divided his army into two parts. One part he gave to his brother Abishai, and said to him:

"Attack the Ammonites in front at the same time I attack the Syrians from the back. But let us watch each other. If I see that the Ammonites are too powerful for you, I will come and help you. If you see that the Syrians are too strong for me, come at once to my aid."

Then Joab talked to his soldiers:

"Fight like men!" he said. "Do not forget that you are fighting for your king, for your people, for the cities of your God! Fight like men!"

Then both Joab and his brother fell to fighting.

Abishai's soldiers drove the Ammonites back into their city and shut them in. Joab's army drove the Syrians back into the country where they broke in confusion and fled. But soon they came back, more

INDIGNITIES HEAPED UPON THE AMBASSADORS.

Syrians than ever. They were fine-looking soldiers, and they carried shields of gold, but they were not strong enough to conquer King David's army. They were beaten, their golden shields were taken from

them and David sent them down to adorn his palace at Jerusalem.

For a whole year the "War of the Ambassadors' Beards" was kept up. The Ammonites were shut up in their city. They could not get out. No one else could get in. The people were starving and finally some soldiers, under the leadership of Joab, got possession of the reservoirs which supplied the city with water and then they had nothing to drink. They could stand it no longer. They were conquered.

Now, Joab had done all the fighting, but when it came to ending the war he sent for the king. And when David had come, he said to him:

"Thou, O king, not I, shouldst have the honor of dealing the last blow to the Ammonites."

They opened the gates of the city and went in. In the temple of Ammon, the soldiers of Israel found a huge idol, the god which the Ammonites worshiped. On its head was a crown of gold weighing a hundred and forty pounds. In the front of it glittered and sparkled a large precious stone. David took the stone to put in his own crown, and the Ammonites became his captives.

The kingdom of Israel was much increased by this war. David became a mighty king. His territory stretched away far and wide. In the east it reached to the land of the Philistines on the shores of the Mediterranean Sea. To the west, it extended to the sands of the great desert of Arabia. It reached northward to the country of the Syrians in the mountains of Lebanon, and southward to the Red Sea. Through the middle of the kingdom flowed the Jordan, and

after the war with the Ammonites was over, there was peace and plenty in the land. These people of Israel, who had once been slaves in Egypt, became a mighty nation and no other king ever dared to send back David's ambassadors with shaven beards.

But alas for David! He began to think what many another man has thought, that because he was so powerful a king he could do as he pleased and not be troubled about the consequences. One day, just after the news had come of the bad treatment the ambassadors had received from the Ammonite king, David was walking, as was the custom in those days, upon the roof of his house. He looked down and saw a beautiful woman drawing water from a well.

Now David already had several wives. Most of the kings in those days had more than one wife. When David saw this woman, he wanted her for his wife, so he inquired who she was and learned that her name was Bathsheba, and that she already had a husband who loved her very much and whose name was Uriah.

Then David did a wicked and evil thing. He stole Bathsheba and took her to his palace, and for fear that her husband would find out what he had done, he gave him a letter to carry to Joab who was with the army which David had sent to make war upon the Ammonites. In this letter he told Joab that he should put Uriah in the thickest of the fight where the danger was the greatest and should then turn and leave him so that he would be killed. Joab did this, for a captain has to obey his king's commands. They fell to fighting fiercely. In the first attack Joab's army was driven back from the city gate, and Joab had to send

word of his defeat by a messenger to the king. He called the messenger to him and said:

"When the king hears that we have been driven from the gate he will be very angry, and when he becomes angry and asks you why we went so near, you shall look him straight in the face and say: 'Thy servant, Uriah, is dead also.' "

So the messenger carried the news of the battle and the defeat back to David. Just as Joab had said, David was very angry and said to the messenger:

"Why went ye so near the city gate? Did Joab not know that they would fire upon him from the walls? He should have known better than to get within reach of their arrows. Return at once to Joab and tell him—"

But the messenger remembered what Joab had told him. He looked the king straight in the face and said:

"Thy servant, Uriah, is dead also."

When the king heard these words a change came over him. His anger disappeared. He spoke kindly to the messenger saying:

"Tell Joab not to be discouraged. Make your attacks stronger till you shall overcome the city."

David was pleased to hear the news that the messenger had brought. Uriah could not return from the war to make trouble for him or to take the beautiful Bathsheba from him. The king married her, and thought he was very happy in the way things had turned out, but he was not happy. No man can be happy when he has done such a thing as he had done. His conscience hurt him whenever he thought of it.

There were certain days on which the king sat on his throne of state and heard the complaints of the people and decided their differences for them. One day, when he was sitting in judgment, an old man entered his presence and bowed low before him. This man was the prophet, Nathan, and he said:

"O king, what shall be done in such a case as this? Once there were two men in this city. One was rich and the other was poor. The rich man had many flocks and herds. The poor man had but one little lamb. He had tended it carefully, brought it up and fed it, and his children loved it. He fed it out of his own cup, and kept it warm in his arms. And one day a traveler came to the rich man's house, and instead of taking one of his own lambs from his large flock for the feast, the rich man took the poor man's one, wee lamb and killed it for the traveler."

David listened to the story and was angry. He said to Nathan:

"The man that hath done this thing shall surely die."

Then Nathan looked in the king's eyes and said:

"Thou art the man. Hear the word of the Lord God against you, O king. He sayeth: 'I anointed thee king over Israel. I delivered thee out of the hand of Saul. I gave thee the house of Israel and the house of Judah, and if that had been too little, I would have given thee more. Wherefore hast thou despised my commandments? Thou hast killed Uriah and hast taken his wife to be thy wife. Now, therefore the sword shall never depart from thy house, because thou hast done this thing."

David made no excuse. He knew that the prophet spoke truly. He knew in his own heart that no man, not even if he be a king, can disobey the Lord's commands without taking the consequences. The laws of God are made for kings as well as for men. David hung his head in sorrow and shame and said:

"I have sinned before the Lord."

But if David sinned, he repented and was punished. He loved the little child which was born to Bathsheba with a great tenderness, but it grew sick and died. One after another his sons grieved and betrayed him. Yet after a while his sins were forgiven, and it came to pass, many years afterward, that it was another son of Bathsheba who reigned in Israel after David. When this little son was born, because the Lord had forgiven him and his heart was again at rest, he named the child Solomon, which means "The Peaceful."

QUESTIONS

Who were the people who lived among the mountains east of the Jordan?

Why did David send his Ambassadors to the court of the Ammonites?

When the king's counselors saw David's messengers what did they advise the king to do?

What did he do to the Ambassadors?

What occurred when David heard of this?

What has this war always been called?

Whom did the Ammonites get to help them?

What was Joab's plan of attack?

What was the result of the war so far as David's kingdom was concerned?

What wicked thing did David do while this war was going on?

How was Bathsheba's husband killed?

What was the story which Nathan the prophet told the king?

What object had he in telling this story?

Did it answer the purpose?

Did David repent and was he punished for what he had done?

What became of Bathsheba's child?

Did she have other children in later years?

Did any son of hers rule over Israel after David was dead?

What was the name of this son and what does that name mean?

THE SIXTEENTH STORY

AN UNGRATEFUL SON

EMEMBER that King David had many sons, and the favorite son of all was Absalom. His father loved him very much, and in all Israel no young man was so praised for his beauty as he. He had long, beautiful hair which grew so heavy that it had to be cut, although it was not the custom to cut the hair in those days. Absalom had also a lovely sister named Tamar, and one day she was cruelly wronged by an older brother, another of David's sons, whose name was Amnon. When Absalom heard of this he swore that he would be revenged. So he waited for a chance to kill Amnon, and by and by the chance came.

They were shearing the sheep on Absalom's farm, and as was the custom, a great feast had been prepared for the shepherds. Absalom invited all his brothers and the king, his father, to come to the feast. David did not go, but all the princes set out for Absalom's farm to the sheep-shearing.

In the afternoon, a very frightened and excited messenger dashed into David's presence crying:

"News, my lord and king! News! Absalom has slain all his brothers. Not one remaineth!"

The king cried out in grief and horror at the tidings which the man had brought and all who surrounded him were dumb with fear and amazement. In a moment more, however, the watchman at the city gate came running and said:

"Let not my lord, the king, grieve. It is only Amnon who is dead. He and Absalom have long been bitter enemies. Let not the king think that all his sons are slain. It is only Amnon. See, yonder they come!"

They followed the watchman to the gate, and sure enough, there came the king's sons, riding down the long hill on the Bethhoron road. Soon they came to the gate, every man upon his mule, hastening as though they were pursued by an enemy, all weeping and lamenting. All were there except Amnon who was dead and Absalom who dared not come. He had fled for his life to the court of his grandfather, the king of Geshur.

But when Absalom realized that on account of the thing he had done he could not come home again, he grew very homesick. He stayed at his grandfather's court for three years, all the while filled with a terrible longing to go home. And David's yearning for the son he loved so much was just as great, but he could not bring him back without putting him to death, for it was against the law.

Joab, David's captain, saw how David grieved for his son, and he knew also that Absalom was mourning because he could not come home. Absalom knew, and so did Joab, that if ever a man deserved death it was Amnon, but he forgot this:

" 'Vengeance is mine. I will repay', saith the Lord."

At last Joab went to a wise woman who lived in Tekoah and said to her:

"Go you to the king and say to him that which I bid you."

A few days later the woman went to David and told him she was a widow who had had two sons. But they quarreled and one of them had killed the other. Now all her family clamored for the death of the other son, and he was all she had. She knew that according to the law he should die, but she said:

"Break the law, O king, and let the blame be on me and on my father's house—not on the king and his throne."

David promised her it should be so and said:

"If any one trouble you further, bring him to me."

"Swear, O king, that the avenger may not come and kill my son."

"As the Lord liveth, not a hair of his head shall fall."

Then said the woman:

"O king, my trouble is not mine. It is thine. It was your dear son, Absalom, who slew his brother. But to kill Absalom will not bring Amnon back. The dead can not be brought back any more than water that has been spilled upon the ground can be gathered up. Amnon is dead, but Absalom is only banished. You have said you would save my son. Then pardon your own."

So the king forgave Absalom and let him come home, but of all the base, wicked, ungrateful sons a man ever had, Absalom was the worst, and of all the

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ABSALOM IN HIS CHARIOT.

unhappy fathers. David was the most wretched. When Absalom returned home, although since Amnon's death he was the oldest son, he began to fear that his father would make his youngest brother, Solomon, king. So he made up his mind that he would take his father's throne away from him. He sought out all David's enemies and made friends with them. He stood day after day at the city gate where the people passed in and out and whenever a man came who had a suit he was carrying to the king for judgment, Absalom would say to him.

"If only I were king instead of my father I would see that every man got justice."

In this way he stole the hearts and won the support of the men of Israel away from the king, his father.

One day a messenger came to David saying:

"Have an eye to thy son Absalom. The hearts of the men of Israel are forsaking thee and are following after Absalom."

David was amazed at this news. He had so loved his son, and he could not believe that the messenger spoke truly, but he was at last convinced that it was so. Then he called his court and his servants about him and said:

"Arise, let us flee. None of us shall escape Absalom if we remain. Let us hasten lest he overtake and bring evil upon us and smite the city with the edge of the sword."

David's faithful followers said they would do whatever he wished, so the king went forth and all his household after him. David's heart was broken when he thought of the conduct of his ungrateful son.

He went barefoot and covered his head and wept as he walked up the Mount of Olives, and all who followed covered their heads and wept also.

As they hurried along, fleeing from Jerusalem and the treachery of Absalom, they passed through a little village called Bahurim. There lived in this place a man who was a bitter enemy to David. His name was Shimei, and he was of a family of the house of Saul. He had been faithful to Saul, had fought for him and for Esh-baal, his son, but after the murder of Esh-baal, who was the last of Saul's sons, Shimei had found himself poor and disgraced and disappointed. He hated David with a deep and bitter hatred.

When he heard of the rebellion of Absalom he rejoiced, and when the king and his companions passed his house, weary and weeping and fleeing for their lives, he got up on the side of the hill with his hands full of stones and threw them at David and his people. Shimei was of the tribe of Benjamin, the same tribe to which Saul belonged. Like David, he also had been skillful in his youth in the use of a sling. So now when he threw stones at the king, his aim was good and the stones struck him. And he cursed the king, also, and said:

"Begone, you man of blood! The Lord has now brought upon you the blood of the house of Saul whose throne you stole! Now the Lord has taken your kingdom and given it to Absalom. You are getting just what you deserve. You are a man of blood!"

Abishai, Joab's brother, who was with David said: "Let me go and kill him, O king."

"Nay," said David. "If the Lord hath told him to curse David, let him curse. After all, this man has reason to be mine enemy, but my son who seeks my life has none. Let him curse on. Perhaps the Lord will look on my affliction and change the curses to blessings."

So David and his men went their way, David grieving all the time because his son whom he loved had betrayed him. As is usually the way whenever there is a change of government, many of the men of David's court who had served him and had been his friends now turned against him and flocked after his son. The first of them to go was Hushai, who had been David's counselor.

When Hushai presented himself before Absalom, he bowed low and said:

"Long live the king!"

"How is this?" said Absalom. "Was not my father thy friend? And is this thy love for thy friend? Why hast thou not gone with the king?"

"Whomever the Lord and the people of Israel choose for their king is my friend," said Hushai. "I served David when he was king. Now I will serve you."

Now, although Absalom had succeeded in driving his father out of Jerusalem, he knew that David still had many loyal friends and might return with a large army and be so powerful that he could not hold the throne he had taken. So he called his followers together to decide what to do next.

There was among his advisers a very wise man. He was so wise that men said that his words were as

the words of God. This man was Ahithophel. Absalom sent for him and said:

"Tell me what to do now."

Ahithophel replied:

"This is the thing to do. I will take twelve thousand men and pursue David this very night. I will come upon him suddenly when he is tired and discouraged and those who have gone with him are afraid. I will make them to flee and leave him. Then will I smite the king only and kill him. You shall then be king in peace."

This advice pleased Absalom and his men well, but Hushai, who had been David's minister said:

"It is not good advice that Ahithophel has given thee. Thou knowest thy father and his men. They are mighty warriors. Instead of being weak and afraid they are as angry as a bear that has been robbed of her young. When you go forth to fight him, suppose he should come out and smite you? Then all these men who follow you will flee and go with David and the people will say; 'There is great slaughter in Absalom's army.' Do not go in haste. Wait a little, till you have gathered together an army which shall number as many soldiers as the sands of the sea-shore. Then do you lead them yourself. We will come upon David as quietly as the dew comes upon the grass, and of all the men who are with him, there will be not one left."

Then said Absalom:

"The advice of Hushai is better than that of Ahithophel. I will take his advice."

This pleased Hushai very much, for you know he

was really David's friend and had gone with Absalom's army only that he might know what they were doing and then tell the king. He called to him Zadok and Abiathar, the priests, and laid the matter before them. Then he hurried a messenger off to David to

Absalom Plotting Against His Father

carry the news of Absalom's intentions to him. The king received the news calmly. He had fought too many battles to be disturbed about one more. Nothing was great enough to over-balance the fact that the son he loved was both ungrateful and false. He was

heart-broken when he thought of Absalom whom he had forgiven and saved from the punishment he deserved and brought back home again only to be driven from his throne and persecuted as a reward.

David divided his army into three parts. One was commanded by Joab, one by Abishai, the third by Ittai. Before they started out to the battle, David called his three captains to him and said:

"For my sake, deal gently with the young man Absalom!"

They met Absalom's army and fell to fighting. Absalom was defeated. He fled with what was left of his army, in great disorder, trying to escape from David's soldiers. Absalom rode into a thick forest. As the mule which bore him ran under the low boughs of a tree, his long hair became tangled in the branches. He could not loosen it. The mule ran on and left him hanging by the hair of his head in the tree. As Joab was gathering his soldiers together after the battle, some one came running to him and said:

"Behold I saw Absalom hanging by the hair of his head in an oak tree in the forest."

"You saw him? Why then did you not kill him? I would have given you ten pieces of silver."

"Not for a thousand pieces of silver would I lay hands on the king's son. I heard what the king said to you—'Deal gently with the young man Absalom for my sake!' "

But Joab would not listen to him. He went out into the forest where he saw Absalom hanging in the tree, just as the messenger had said. He took his spear and thrust it through Absalom's heart.

David sat by the gate. On the wall above a watchman was stationed who gave him news of the battle. Finally a man came running and said:

"All is well. Blessed be the Lord who hath delivered up the men who raised their hands against the king!"

But David said only:

"Is the young man Absalom safe?"

"There was a great tumult as I came away, O king, but I learned not what it was."

Then another man came running and said: "All is well!" And again the king said:

"Is the young man Absalom safe?"

Then said the messenger:

"May all the king's enemies be as Absalom is!"

Then David knew that Absalom was dead. He rose up from his seat and went up to the chamber over the gate where he wept bitterly for his son, and as he walked along they heard him crying:

"Would God I had died instead of thee, O Absalom, my son!"

QUESTIONS

Who was David's favorite son?

What was this son noted for?

After he had sworn to be revenged on his brother what did he do?

Whom did he invite to the feast?

What was the news which the messenger brought to David that afternoon?

After Absalom had slain his brother where did he go?

Why did he not come home?

What plan did Joab use in order to get David to forgive Absalom so that he might come home again?

How did Absalom repay his father for his kindness?

What were some of the things he did when he was trying to get his father's throne away from him?

What did David do when he learned of his son's treachery?

What happened to David and his followers when they were going through the village of Bahurim?

What did David say to his nephew when he wished to kill Shimei?

Which of David's ministers had deserted him and followed Absalom?

What advice did Ahithophel give him?

What did Hushai say, and what motive had he in going with Absalom?

What did David ask of his three captains before they went out to meet Absalom in battle?

What happened to Absalom as he was fleeing?

What did Joab do when he heard of it?

What did David say when he heard that Absalom was dead?

THE SEVENTEENTH STORY

A FRIEND IN NEED

OU will remember that Absalom, after he had driven his father from his throne, called his counselors to ask their advice as to what to do next. He was surprised to see among those who had followed him Hushai, who had been his father's friend, yet he knew how wise he was and was glad to have his advice. Hushai was true to David. He had followed Absalom because he wanted to learn his plans and tell them to the king.

There would have been a change in the history of Israel if Absalom had followed the advice of Ahithophel. Had he allowed him to take his army and pursue David that very night, he would have come upon the fleeing king and his followers when they were weary and unprepared, and no doubt David would have been killed. He could not have fought alone against Ahithophel's army. Just think how different would have been the story of Israel if David had died at this time! Solomon would not have reigned in all his glory nor would that stately temple ever have been built on the Holy Hill at Jerusalem. Hushai knew that if David were attacked that night he would be helpless, so he said to Absalom:

"Nay. The advice which Ahithophel has given thee is not good advice. Thy father is not the weak creature he makes him. Thou knowest how strong his army is. He will fight back. He will conquer thee, and then all thy followers will forsake thee and go back to the king."

Then he told Absalom how fine a thing it would be if he could get together a mighty army—soldiers as many as there were sands on the sea-shore—and be at the head of it himself. He flattered the young prince till he was quite in favor of doing as he said.

When Ahithophel learned that Absalom had refused to listen to his advice but had followed that of Hushai, his feelings were hurt. He was supposed to be the wisest man of the court. David had always listened when he spoke and had acted on his advice. He had forsaken the king, though, and followed his rebellious son, and now Absalom had declined to listen to him, and Ahithophel was filled with anger, perhaps remorse. He went away and killed himself, and this is the first case of suicide told of in the Bible. Saul, it is true, fell upon his sword, but he was already wounded to death by the enemies' arrows. Ahithophel's act was due partly to wounded pride, partly to the fact that he knew exactly what would happen if Absalom acted upon Hushai's advice. David would have time to collect his army and recover his throne, and without doubt, he himself would be the first man to be punished. He had forsaken David, his master, who loved him and valued his counsel and had given his services to one who had not the wisdom to appreciate him. There was nothing more to

live for, he thought, so he would end his own life before David returned to put him to death.

Hushai was pleased when he learned that Absalom had determined to follow his advice. He sent in haste for Zadok and Abiathar and told them to get word of this to David. Each of these men had a son, so they sent for them and told them to carry the news to the king. The young men were named Ahimaaz and Jonathan. Their fathers warned them that they must be very careful and not allow themselves to be captured by Absalom's men, and that if they should be taken, they must try to send on their news by some one else.

The two young men started out, but a boy saw them running and went to tell Absalom. He sent soldiers to capture them, but they ran on so swiftly that they could not be overtaken. Finally they reached the house of a man whom they knew to be friendly to David. They told him that they were bearing a message to the king and were pursued by Absalom's men.

There was a well in the man's yard, so he said to the young fellows:

"Climb down into my well."

They did so. The man watched and he could see across the pastures the men whom Absalom had sent, looking everywhere for Ahimaaz and Jonathan. While he was watching the men, his wife spread a cover over the top of the well and put some ground corn upon it. To look at it no one would ever know it was a well. The men came on in great haste and when they reached the house they said:

"Where are the young men who ran this way?"

The man knew not what to answer but his wife spoke up quickly and said:

"They have gone over the water."

She meant the water in the well, but there was a little brook running across the pasture back of the house and the men thought she meant that. So they hurried on, and when they were out of sight, Ahimaaz and Jonathan climbed out of the well and went on their way to David.

Hushai was a little afraid that Absalom might change his mind and take Ahithophel's advice after all, so he told Ahimaaz and Jonathan to tell the king not to spend the night on this side of the Jordan but to go on across the river. So the weary king and his followers hastened on. David was heart-sore over the conduct of his son. He felt that most of all, and he thought that all his friends had forsaken him and had gone with Absalom.

But David was mistaken. When he came the next day to Mahanaim, he was met by an old man who came up and bowed low before him. The man had brought a great many things with him—couches and rugs, bowls and earthen vessels, wheat, barley and meal, parched corn, butter and cheese, and all these he begged David to accept. The king looked at the old man and said:

"Who art thou?"

"I am thy servant Barzillai of Gilead."

"What are all these things for?"

"The couches are for my lord the king to lie down upon. The rugs are to cover and keep him warm.

The wheat and barley and parched corn are for him to eat, and the earthen vessels I have brought that he may drink. There are calves and sheep and oxen and honey and butter and cheese, for I have thought, 'My lord, the king, and his people will be hungry and thirsty in the wilderness!' "

David took courage when he heard the words of this kind old man. He thought: "If there is one man in Gilead who is faithful there must be many others." David accepted the man's gifts and promised he would not forget him.

Absalom and his army also crossed the Jordan and camped in Gilead. David began to gather together his own soldiers and finally the two armies met in battle. Joab was captain with David, so Absalom had made Amasa captain over his army. David's army was in three parts, commanded by Joab, Abishai and Ittai. Before they started out David called them to him and said:

"I myself will go out to battle with you."

But the three captains said:

"Nay. You shall not go. If we are forced to flee no one will care for us. If we are killed it will make no difference. But you are worth ten thousand of us. You shall help us from the city. That will be best."

David listened to their advice. He stood and watched the army as it marched out to battle. His heart ached for Absalom whom he loved and feared would be killed. Before they went forth he asked his captains to deal gently with Absalom for his sake, and then he sat down between the two gates at

Mahanaim, while up above him on the city wall was the watchman who gave him news of the battle.

All day long they fought. Toward evening the watchman saw a man running toward the gate. He told the king. Then another man came running and this man carried the news that David had feared to hear. Absalom was dead. He had ridden into the forest and his long hair had become tangled in the branches of an oak tree. Here Joab had seen him, and forgetting the request of his king, had thrust his spear into Absalom's heart and killed him. David wept and lamented, and the people who loved him said:

"What is it to us that we have gained the victory? The king is grieving for his son."

Then they stole away into their tents, not as an army that had won a great victory but as one which had been defeated and was ashamed. When David saw this he roused himself from his grief and went again and sat at the gate. The soldiers all came back. Absalom was dead. His army was defeated. There was now no reason why David should not return to Jerusalem.

He called his people and his army together and they started homeward. As usual, the men who had betrayed him were the very first to bid him welcome. There was Shimei, who had cursed and stoned him when he was fleeing, bare footed and weeping, from Jerusalem. All the faithful men of Judah came to Gilgal to meet David and bring him across the Jordan, so Shimei gathered together a thousand of the tribe of Benjamin and went with them. And when

the king was about to cross the river, Shimei bowed low before him and said:

"Let not my lord remember what his servant did on that day when he was fleeing from the city. Let the king not grieve on account of it. Thy servant knows he has sinned. Therefore he has come first to bow before my lord the king."

Abishai, David's nephew who was standing near, heard these words and said:

"Shall I not put him to death?"

But David answered and said:

"Not so. Shall any man be put to death this day in Israel when the Lord has granted that his servant should return home in safety?"

Besides Shimei there was also Ziba, with his fifteen sons and twenty servants. They dashed into the river and rode back and forth helping the king to get across. David did not know yet how false Ziba was and how he had deceived him and gotten possession of the lands which he had given to Merib-baal, the little lame son of his old friend, Jonathan. But he learned it all as soon as he reached home, for poor Merib-baal had grieved and grieved because the king had been made to believe him false. He had neither changed his clothes nor trimmed his beard nor dressed his lame feet since that day on which the king had fled.

When David came near to the banks of the Jordan, he thought many times of Barzillai, the fine, old man of Gilead, who had brought him food and things to make him comfortable in the wilderness when he had been driven from home. He wondered if he should ever see him again, and when they reached the river

and were about to start to cross, David looked up and saw Barzillai. He asked the king if he might cross the river with him and say good-bye to him on the other bank of the Jordan. Barzillai was now eighty years old. He knew that his days were numbered. Perhaps he should never see his king again, so he wished to go with him to the other side of the river and there tell him good-bye. David's heart was touched at the devotion of this faithful, old man and he said to him:

DAVID BIDDING FAREWELL TO BARZILLAI.

"Come with me to Jerusalem. I will take care of you in your old age."

But Barzillai replied:

"Why should thy servant go to Jerusalem? He has not many years to live."

"But come with me. I would reward thee for thy kindness."

"Thy servant wants no reward. I have but come to cross the Jordan with my lord, the king, because of my love for him. I am eighty years old. I can no longer see nor hear well. I can not even taste well that which I eat and drink. Perhaps I should not

be able to tell good from evil. I should be a burden to my lord, the king, if I went to Jerusalem. I will return to Gilead to die in my own city."

David listened in silence to the old man's words and then said:

"Is there aught that I may do for thee?"

Barzillai hesitated and then replied:

"My lord, here is my son. He is young. Let him go with my lord, and let the king do unto him that which he would do for his father."

"Thy son shall be as mine own," answered David. "He shall go with me, and I will do for him all that you desire. If there is anything else you would ask of me, that will I do also for you."

But Barzillai had no more to ask. The king kissed the old man and blessed him. When they had crossed the river, Barzillai told David good-bye. He returned home to Gilead where, not long afterward, he died. David went with his victorious army back to his good city of Jerusalem, and when in after years he looked back and remembered the ingratitude and treachery of Absalom, he thought of this faithful, old man whose devotion had been the one gleam of light in the darkness of those unhappy days.

QUESTIONS

Did Absalom follow the advice of Ahithophel or Hushai?

What would have happened if he had taken the advice of the other minister?

What did Ahithophel do when he learned of Absalom's decision?

How did Hushai get word to David of all this?

What happened to the messengers as they were on their way?

What did Hushai tell David to do?

When the king and his followers reached Mahanaim who met them?

What had this man brought with him?

What did David do when he heard of the death of his son?

What did the soldiers do when they saw how the king was grieving for Absalom?

Who was the first to greet David as he was going with his army back to Jerusalem?

What reply did David make this time to Abishai when he wished to kill Shimei?

What other false man came out to meet the king?

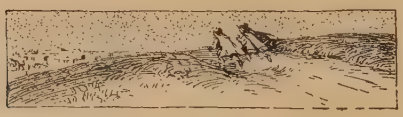
When David arrived at the banks of the Jordan who was waiting for him there?

Why had he come?

What did David wish to do for him?

When Barzillai refused to go with the king what did he ask him to do?

Did David grant his request?



THE EIGHTEENTH STORY

THE SORROWS OF A KING

CONCERNING the latter years of David's reign, sad stories must be told.

He was broken in health, and his mental powers, also, were failing fast. As he looked back over his long reign, the remembrance of certain things he had done during those years lay heavily upon his mind. He thought many times of the day when Saul had driven him from his court and into the wilderness and had tried to take his life because he feared that he would step in and take the throne away from his sons. How often David must have thought of this when his own sons grew up and each one of them wanted to be ruler over Israel!

There were other things also that David remembered. When he was old and could not sleep during the long nights, he could not drive from his mind the memory of the sin he had committed before the Lord when he stole Uriah's wife, and perhaps he felt that the ingratitude and crimes of his sons were sent him as a punishment. What must have been his remorse! Sin itself may be forgiven—even forgotten, but no man yet has ever escaped the consequences. They come back to him through his children and his chil-

dren's children. As there is no love like that which the father and the mother bestow upon their children, so, also, there is no suffering like that which they feel when their children do evil unto them. It was so with David. He saw his own faults and sins looking at him from the eyes of his sons.

The king's troubles on account of his sons did not end with the death of Absalom. David grieved so for Absalom that Joab, his captain, came to him and said:

"You shame your servants who have this day saved your kingdom and your life. Wouldst thou have been better pleased had Absalom lived and all thy princes and thy brave officers perished? Stop grieving for thy unworthy son. Come forth and re-assure thy people. If you do not, I swear that not a man will remain by you. That will be the worst thing that could befall you."

So David ceased lamenting. He rose and sat by the gate again and all the people came and paid him honor. Now that Absalom was dead, they began asking him why he did not return to Jerusalem. At last all the men of Judah over whom David had reigned in Hebron for seven years, sent word as one man, saying:

"Return with all your servants."

David did so. When he reached the banks of the Jordan, the men of Judah met him at Gilgal and saw him safely across the river and on his way back to Jerusalem.

But if David thought his troubles were over, he was mistaken. No sooner was Absalom dead than Adonijah, the next oldest son, thought he would like to be

king in his father's place. David was fond of this son also, but he had never controlled him. He had never said to him:

"Why have you done this or that thing?"

Declaring Adonijah King.

All his life Adonijah had done whatever pleased him, and now he thought he would do as he pleased once more. He would take away his father's throne.

The first thing he did was to begin living like a prince. He had his chariot and his horsemen and his servants. Joab, the captain, who had by no means

forgotten that David had appointed Amasa to lead the army against Sheba, persuaded Abiathar, the priest, to join him, and together they forsook David and followed Adonijah who thought that with the aid of both his father's captain and his priest, he would surely be successful.

One day Adonijah made a great feast. He invited all his brothers, the princes, all the men of his father's court, except David, his younger brother Solomon, and Nathan, the prophet, who was not at all pleased with Adonijah's doings. When the company had gathered and it was time to sit down to the feast, Joab sat down at Adonijah's right hand and Abiathar at his left. Suddenly they all stood up and shouted:

"Long live King Adonijah!"

Word of all this was quickly carried to Nathan, and he hastened away to find Bathsheba, David's wife.

"Hast thou heard," he said, "that Adonijah has been made king? Does David know of it? Hath he done this thing without our knowledge? Hearken therefore to my counsel. If thou wouldst save thy life and the life of thy son, Solomon, do as I tell thee. Go at once to the king. Remind him of his promise to thee that thy son Solomon should be king after him. Go in haste!"

So Bathsheba hastened to the apartments of the king and threw herself at his feet.

After Bathsheba had spoken, Nathan came in and told the same story.

"My lord the king," he said, bowing to the ground,

"hast thou said: 'Adonijah shall be king?' Hast thou done this thing and not showed it unto thy faithful servant?"

Then said David to Bathsheba:

"As the Lord liveth who hath redeemed me from all my adversaries, Solomon, your son, shall be king after me. He shall sit upon my throne. This he shall do this day."

Then turning to Nathan, the king said:

"Take my servants with you. Let Solomon, my son, ride upon my own mule. Bring him to the Gihon spring, and when he is there, let Zadok, the priest, and Nathan the prophet, pour the sacred oil upon his head and anoint him king over all Israel. Then blow the trumpet loud and say:

"Long live King Solomon!"

Nathan did as the king had commanded. He took with him Zadok and Beniah, set the young Solomon on the king's mule and brought him to Gihon. When they arrived, the priest took the horn of precious oil and poured it upon Solomon's head. Then they blew the trumpet, as David had commanded, and all cried:

"Long live King Solomon. May his throne be greater than the throne of our lord King David."

When the king heard that all had been done according to his wish, he said:

"Blessed be the Lord God of Israel who hath given one of my descendants to sit upon my throne this day, my eyes seeing it!"

Just as Adonijah and his guests were finishing the feast, they heard the blare of trumpets and the sound of shouting. They sprang to their feet and asked:

"Who blows the trumpet? And what meaneth the noise and shouting?"

Then Jonathan, the son of Abiathar, the priest, came running to his father and said:

"David hath made Solomon king. Zadok and Nathan have anointed him. He hath taken his seat on the throne of Israel. All the people are rejoicing and shouting, 'Long live King Solomon!' "

Adonijah and his followers were filled with terror. They got up from the feast and fled every man to his own house. Adonijah thought he would surely be put to death, so instead of going to his own house, he fled to the altar, beside the Ark of God, thinking that Solomon would not slay him there. Word of this was brought to Solomon. "See," they said, "Adonijah fears King Solomon. Behold he hath caught hold of the horns of the altar and hath said, 'Let King Solomon swear to me that he will not slay his servant with the sword!' "

Then the young king sent word to his brother saying:

"If thou shalt show thyself a worthy man, not a hair of thy head shall be touched. But if thou art wicked, thou shalt surely die."

Then Solomon sent for his brother, and when he had come he said to him:

"Go in peace!"

David continued to watch over the affairs of his kingdom while he lived, but he did not live long after Solomon became king. He had lived out his life. He was about seventy-five years old and had reigned over Israel for more than forty years.

QUESTIONS

What other one of David's sons made trouble for him in his old age?

Had Adonijah been a good son in his youth? Why?

When Adonijah made a great feast did he invite all his brothers?

Which one was not asked?

Was David himself invited?

What did the men do when they sat down at the feast?

What did Nathan the prophet do when he heard of it?

What did Bathsheba do?

What did David say when he was told of it?

What did he tell Nathan to do?

What did Adonijah and his guests do when they heard the blowing of the trumpet and the shouting?

THE NINETEENTH STORY

THE SWEET SINGER OF ISRAEL

ROM David's early childhood he loved to sing. He was not only a shepherd, a soldier and a king. He was also a poet and a musician. He wrote many of the Psalms which we use today in our churches. There was scarcely an event of his life that he did not express in song.

When David first went to the court of Saul, it was for the sole reason that he was skillful with the harp and was able to sing. He was then only a little shepherd boy. He gave no sign that he would one day be the great warrior and king he afterward became. For a long time Saul listened to his little singer with delight. His fits of melancholy and depression, his outbursts of wrath were soothed by the sound of David's harp and his sweet voice. When he was first brought to the court, the physicians did not know what effect his music would have upon the king, so David was placed in a little ante-room near the apartment where the king lay on his couch, and was told to play and sing as though he were singing to himself.

For the first day or two, the king did not heed him much, but after that, the physicians who were watch-

ing him saw that he was listening to the music. Then the next day they told David not to play. When the king no longer heard the sound of David's harp and voice, he asked for him, and after that Saul kept David by him till they were forced to go forth again to fight against the Philistines.

The poor, mad king loved David dearly. David knew it, and this was why, when he had so many chances to take Saul's life, he always refused to harm him. There is no more unhappy man on earth than he who is jealous of some one for whom he has a great affection.

David was the first great musician. Is it not wonderful to think that in those far-off, olden times, when life was wild, and men were rude and bold and had to fight to live, that there should be a man like David who was at the same time a soldier, a poet, a musician and a king? He began singing his songs in his very early life when he was a little fellow living out on the hills, under the blue sky. He saw in nature those things which awaken music in the soul. When he fled from the wrath of Saul and took refuge in the cave in the wilderness, he was without food and without a sword—but he had his harp, and all the time he lived in the wilderness, he poured out his sorrows and his faith in God in song.

When David was king in Jerusalem, he established the custom of having music in the services in the temple. There were sixteen thousand priests among the people and of these he selected one-fourth as singers and players for the religious services. From these he chose some to be musical leaders and teachers.

Under David's own direction, these teachers took the strange and somewhat weird music of the east and adapted it to the temple service, just as many years later, Martin Luther, realizing the value of music in carrying out the great reformation, took the simple tunes which he had heard as a child from the soldiers, the sailors and the miners and adapted them to the service of God. It may be said truly that David was the father of music and that those musicians who have since written the great oratorios and symphonies did but follow in the footsteps of him who will ever be known as the Sweet Singer of Israel.

DAVID, THE SWEET SINGER.

So, all through David's life, his harp was his constant companion. When he was a lad watching his father's flocks he found time to make songs and sing them. At the court of Saul, in the cave of Adullam, in the wilderness of Judah, at the court of Achish, in the valley of the Jordan and on that sad and dismal day when he had fled from his throne and city because of the rebellion of his ungrateful son, Absalom, he comforted himself with music. In his later life, in the darkness and sadness of his soul because of his

sin, he proved that it is not joy but sorrow which often wrings the divinest harmonies from the souls of men.

Yet it was not always in times of trial that he sang. When he brought the Ark to Jerusalem, and when he returned in triumph from his battles and wars, he always honored the event by some glad song of thanksgiving and praise.

I want to tell you something about the most famous of David's songs. We read the Psalms and hear them read all the days of our lives without stopping to remember the wonderful fact that they were written so many thousand years ago by a man whom, now-a-days, we should look upon as a man of no education. In those days education meant teaching a boy to earn his living and a girl to perform the household duties. It did not mean teaching children to read and write and to play and sing.

One of the earliest of David's songs is the eighth Psalm. He must have sung it when he was a lad tending the sheep, and that makes it only the more wonderful. Take your Bible and read this psalm.

Another of the Psalms which expresses thoughts which must have come to him while he was still a shepherd is the nineteenth. This song is in three parts. In it he sings not only of the glory of the universe, but of the glory and strength and peace which comes to the man who keeps a good conscience and a pure heart, and it ends with a prayer.

Some of David's greatest songs came from his grief on account of the wrong he had done. These are called the Penitential Psalms, and they voice the cry

of a man who knows that he has fallen in the sight of both God and man.

Have mercy upon me, O God, according to thy lovingkindness,
For I acknowledge my transgressions and my sins are ever before me.

After the repentance and the forgiveness, David sang again, this time joyously:

Blessed is he whose transgressions are forgiven.
I acknowledged my sin unto thee,
And mine iniquity did I not hide:
And thou forgavest my sin.

But of all the songs of David, it is the twenty-third Psalm which is the best known and loved. There are many who think it the most beautiful thing in the English language. The Bible is both history and literature. If we did not love it for what it teaches, we could not but love it for its beauty. The twenty-third Psalm refers once more to David's life as a shepherd. It but describes the every-day life of the shepherd in Palestine at the present time:

The Lord is my shepherd; I shall not want.
He maketh me to lie down in green pastures;
He leadeth me beside the still waters.
Yea, though I walk through the valley of the shadow of death,
I will fear no evil.
Thy rod and thy staff, they comfort me.
Thou preparest a table before me in the presence of mine enemies.

Surely goodness and mercy shall follow me all the days of my life,
And I shall dwell in the house of the Lord forever.

So, when we read these songs of David—songs of joy, of triumph, of grief and woe, songs of thanksgiving and praise, of repentance, of the peace which comes with forgiveness, and then remember that the man who wrote them died nearly a thousand years before Jesus Christ was born, we forget all his faults and remember that he deserved the name the people gave him—The Sweet Singer of Israel.

QUESTIONS

What else was David beside a soldier and a king?

What did he write?

When he first went to the court of Saul what did he go for?

Did his music have any effect upon the king at first?

What method did the physicians take of finding out whether Saul would take notice of David's music or not?

Was there ever a great musician before David?

Where did he first learn to sing?

After he became king of all Israel at Jerusalem what did he do?

Did he take his harp with him wherever he went?

Would we call David a man of education nowadays?

Was David a lover of nature?

Was he a deeply religious man?

To what part of his life do most of his Psalms refer?

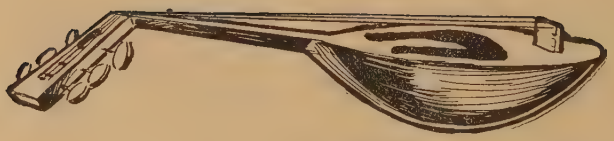
What was the most famous of his songs?

What is the best known and best loved of the Psalms of David?

What is the story of the Twenty-third Psalm?

How long before the birth of Jesus Christ were the Psalms of David written?

By what name has David ever been known because of his Psalms?



THE TWENTIETH STORY

THE SHEPHERD-KING

OW great an event in the history of mankind is the birth of a child! None can tell what its future is to be. Do you suppose that the mother of Napoleon, when she held her little, dark-skinned, Italian baby in her arms ever thought that he would one day be the most famous man of his age, the emperor of the French? Of course not. No more did Jesse, the good, old farmer of Bethlehem ever dream that the ruddy, red-cheeked lad who sang songs to himself while he tended his father's sheep would one day be the great King David, ruler over Israel.

The most historic spot in all the world is the little town of Bethlehem. It is different to-day, of course, from what it was in David's time. Once it was called Ephratah, which means "the fruitful," and even after centuries of oppression under the rule of the Moslem, its vine-clad hills and olive orchards still give it some right to the name. In the centre of the little town is an open square, and on the farther end of it is a great church which covers the spot where, nearly two thousand years ago, a greater King than David was born.

Many of the striking things in the history of Is-

rael are connected with Bethlehem. We first hear of the little town in connection with the great grief of Jacob for the death of his beloved Rachel. Indeed, if you will leave the village and go for a little way down the Old Jerusalem Road, you will come to a white-domed, little mosque which marks her grave. From across the distant blue mountains of Moab, came the beautiful Ruth to Bethlehem to work in the fields of her kinsman Boaz, afterward her husband. David was Ruth's great-grandson, and it was his name which first brought fame to Bethlehem. It was because of David's love for Bethlehem, and his attachment to the home of his childhood that he had so strong a hold upon the hearts of the men of Judah.

The first few years after David became king of all Israel, there was a great deal of fighting. He conquered the Philistines, the Moabites, the Ammonites, the Edomites. David's army was everywhere successful. Jerusalem became a powerful capital and David a mighty king. One of the first things he did, you know, was to bring the Ark of the Lord to Jerusalem, and in the peaceful years which followed the close of the great wars, he began to think about building a temple where it should be kept.

"Why," he asked himself, "should I live in a cedar-roofed and cedar-lined palace, while the Ark of the Lord has but a tent? Shall my house, then, be a greater place than the house of the Lord? Would not a splendid temple, with a high altar, on which should rest the Ark of God, call forth more reverence and a deeper devotion among my people?"

David thought so much about the building of a

temple that he called in Nathan, the prophet, and asked his advice. At first Nathan favored the plan, but in the night the voice of God spoke to him, and in the morning he revealed to David what the Lord had said. The Ark had shared the wandering of Israel since the day of Moses. The Lord had never asked for it a more gorgeous temple. The simple tent which enclosed it was a sign of their simple faith. But because it had been in David's heart to do this thing, the Lord, speaking through Nathan, made a promise to David that the throne of Israel should never depart from his house—that the kingdom should not be taken from his family as it had been from Saul and his children.

The reign of David was one of glory for many years, but after the wrong he did to Uriah, his honest, faithful soldier, there began a period of decline. The kingdom lost none of its fruitful lands, it is true, but the people became disunited and restless. Never afterward was there unity among them. The peace, the hearty boldness in all enterprises, the good fortune—all were gone. The men of Israel were fearlessly honest. Any man of them might have as many wives as he chose, but he could not break the Seventh Commandment and still be held in honor, no—not even the king! David reaped the consequences of his misdeeds. They came back to him in the conduct of his children. Ammon, the oldest, was guilty of a worse crime than his father's. Absalom and Adonijah repaid his love and kindness with treachery and ingratitude, and not long afterward, the country was visited by a terrible famine. For three years there was

scarcely any rain. The crops were so poor that the people starved. David called the priest to him and said:

"I pray thee, ask of God the cause of our misfortunes."

When the priest returned, he told David that the famine had been sent them because of the evil doing of Saul, the former king, toward the tribe that dwelt at Gibeon in Canaan. They had been promised by Joshua that no harm should come to them, but Saul had not honored the promise. He had fallen upon them in battle and had slain their sons. David made them offers of gold and silver but they would not be satisfied. They wanted revenge. They demanded that seven of Saul's grandsons should be given them to be hanged. David was helpless. He had no choice but to consent. On account of his love for and his oath to Jonathan, he saw that his son was spared, but when it came time for the barley harvest, about the beginning of April, the seven grandsons of Saul were hanged and their bodies allowed to hang till the rain should fall again.

But Rizpah, the mother of two of the lads, came to the high rock to watch over the bodies of her dead sons. She thought not of anything but her love for her slaughtered boys and their kinsmen. Her conduct was a revelation of the mighty love of a mother —a story which should never be forgotten in the whole history of humanity. During all those dreary months, she sat, day after day and night after night, by the crosses on which hung the bodies of her boys. "The sun and the wind must do as it will," she

thought, "but while I watch, the vultures and the wild beasts shall not touch them." When the rain fell she took them away and buried them with Jonathan and Saul in the family tomb at Zelah.

David's long reign came to an end at last. He was more than seventy years old, and although it was the

Rizpah Watching Over the Bodies of Her Dead Sons.

ancient law that no one should be buried within the city walls, the law was set aside in the case of the king. The city which he had captured and had done so much to build up should hold his tomb. For many and many a year those who were proud of their race pointed out with pride the place where lay the bones

of their great king. In the pentecostal sermon Saint Peter says, "His sepulchre is with us to this day!" Now no man knows the spot, but somewhere among the hills and under the ruins of that ancient city lie the bones of the Shepherd-king, the "man after God's own heart," awaiting the resurrection.

QUESTIONS

What is the most historic town in the world?

What was it originally called?

What is the first mention of Bethlehem in the Bible?

Who was David's great-grandmother?

To what tribe of Israel did David belong?

What was David's great wish for Israel?

Why did he wish to build a temple at Jerusalem?

Whose advice did he ask about the building of the temple?

What did the prophet tell him was the wish of the Lord?

What promise did the Lord make to David because he had wished to build the temple?

Were the last years of David's life prosperous years in the history of Israel?

THE TWENTY-FIRST STORY

THE SON OF DAVID

USUALLY a king is not willing to give away his throne to another while he still lives, but when the news was brought to David that Adonijah had made a great feast and his followers had proclaimed him king, he said:

"Nay, it shall not be. Solomon, my son, shall be king after me. I have promised."

So Nathan, the prophet, and Zadok, the priest, had taken the little fellow, according to the king's commands, placed him on his father's mule, and gone with him to the spot which David had selected, near a spring at Gihon. Here the priest had anointed the boy with oil, saying:

"As God hath been with King David, so may he be also with Solomon!"

Then they had blown the trumpet and all the people rejoiced and cried:

"Long live King Solomon!"

David had a great love for all his sons. Not even the crime of Ammon, the first born, nor the ingratitude of Absalom, the beautiful one, nor the treachery of Adonijah could destroy the affection in David's heart for his sons. But although he loved them all,

he had a peculiar love for Solomon, the son of Bathsheba. David had several wives, but he loved Bathsheba best, and he kept the promise he had made to her that her son should reign after him.

How different was the childhood of Solomon from that of his father. David was the son of a farmer, and had grown up amid the quiet surroundings of his father's home. Solomon was the son of a king. All the splendor of court life, the glitter of a palace, the service of servants and soldiers were his from his birth. He never had to struggle against the difficulties and the enemies which his father had to meet. David was the son of Jesse, a plain citizen of Bethlehem. Solomon was the son of David, the hero-king of Israel. He was born in Jerusalem, the new capital of David's empire and the religious stronghold of the kingdom.

Solomon Taken on His Father's Mule.

Bathsheba, Solomon's mother, also loved him greatly. The grief a mother feels for the child who dies, always increases the love for the child who lives. It was so with Bathsheba. When this child was born,

David named him Solomon, which means "The peaceful," perhaps because he hoped that his son would have a more peaceful life than his own had been.

Solomon was quite young when he was made king. We do not know just how old he was, but it is thought that he was about twelve years old. Although he was really the king, David, on account of Solomon's youth, still carried on the affairs of the kingdom while he lived. But David grew very feeble and knew he could not live very much longer, so one day he roused himself and called the young king and all his ministers before him and said:

"Behold, I am growing old. Hearken ye therefore, to me. Hear my last words to you and to my son, the king."

David then told them that it was not himself but the Lord who had chosen Solomon to be king. It was the Lord, not himself, who had said that Solomon, not David, should build the great temple at Jerusalem. He told the ministers and counselors that Solomon was but a youth and begged them to help and protect him.

Then he gave his son the plans for the building of the great temple, the House of the Lord, which should contain and protect forever, the Ark of the Covenant. Although David knew that he might not build the temple himself, yet he had for years been collecting the material, and now he gave over to Solomon all the gold and silver, the stone and the cedar from Lebanon which he had gathered together to be used in building it. David had said to the people:

"Each of you shall make an offering for the build-

ing of the temple. Let each man give that which is in his heart to give."

All the gifts of the people had been accepted with praise and thanksgiving and had been blessed for their future use in the building of God's House. The ministers and counselors, the old King David and the young King Solomon then offered a sacrifice to the Lord. Solomon was once more declared king of all Israel, and all promised David that they would aid and defend him.

Solomon, like David, was a deeply religious man until the very last years of his life. Both he and David did many things which we can not now understand and which seem to us very wrong. But the times have changed, and we can not judge the people of old by ourselves.

QUESTIONS

Who became king after the death of David?

What was the meaning of his name?

Who was the new king's mother?

What was the difference between the childhood of Solomon and that of David his father?

Why was it that Solomon, who was only a boy, was made king instead of his older brothers?

Who was Solomon's teacher?

Who carried on the affairs of the kingdom while Solomon was young?

What did David do before he died?

Was Solomon a religious man like his father?

TWENTY-SECOND STORY

A WISE CHOICE

ONCE, not long after the death of David, the young King Solomon went up to the high place at Gibeon to offer a sacrifice to the Lord. After the sacrifice was over, he lay down to sleep, and in his dreams the Lord appeared to him, saying:

"Ask, and whatsoever thou shalt ask shall be given thee."

What should he ask? He could have but one wish. There were many things he might ask for. He might choose a long life. He might ask for riches, for power, for victory over all his enemies. But Solomon remembered what his father had said to him before he died:

"My son, that man must be just who wishes to rule over the people."

So when the young king realized that he could have but one wish, he said:

"I am but a child, but I am king in the place of my great father, David. I must rule over all his people. Therefore give thy servant an understanding heart that I may judge the people wisely. Teach me the difference between right and wrong. Give me wisdom."

Solomon was already wise. He would not have made this answer if he had not been. The voice of the Lord replied:

"Thy answer hath pleased me. Because thou hast not asked for thyself long life, nor riches, nor power nor victory over thine enemies, all these shall be given thee. Thou hast asked wisdom and understanding, and lo, thou shalt have an understanding heart, and there shall be no other king like unto thee. Walk in my ways even as thy father, David, walked, and I will lengthen thy days."

Solomon awoke and could scarcely believe that it had been a dream, so real had been the vision. Not long after this he had a chance to show his wisdom. One day when he was sitting on his throne to hear the complaints of the people and to decide their quarrels for them, two women came before him. Each of the women carried in her arms a little baby, and one of the children was dead. They were bad women, both of them. They had done wicked and evil things, but each declared that the living child was hers and wanted to keep it. Neither wanted the dead baby. One of the women bowed low before the king and said:

"Hear me I pray thee, O king. This woman and I live in the same house. Each of us had a little child. Mine was three days older than hers. Last night while we were asleep the child of this woman died, and when she awoke and found that her child was dead, she came over to where I slept and took my baby and left her dead one in its place. When I awoke in the morning to nurse my child, behold the

baby in my arms was dead. But when it grew light, I looked at it and it was not my child but hers. I pray thee, O king, make her give me back my baby."

But the other mother spoke and said:

SOLOMON THE WISE JUDGE.

"It is not true. The living child is mine. Her baby is dead."

The king hesitated. What should he do in such a case as this? He wished to give the living child to its own mother, but how was he to tell? Suddenly he turned to a servant standing near and said:

"Bring me a sword."

Then he turned again to the two women and said:

"This will I do. One of you hath said, 'The living child is mine and your son is dead.' The other says, 'Nay, your son is dead and mine lives.' My servant shall therefore cut the living child in two. Each of you may have half of it."

The King looked closely at the two women as he spoke. One stood silently by and made no answer. But the real mother whose heart was full of love and fear for her baby, when she heard the king's words, burst into loud weeping. She wrung her hands in grief and cried:

"Nay, nay, my lord and king. I beg of thee do not kill the child. It is mine, but give it to the other woman. Do not put it to death."

Then the king knew that if she loved the child well enough to give it to the other woman rather than see it put to death, she was the real mother. So he said: "Take the child. It is thine. Go in peace."

When the people heard of this judgment of their king they praised and loved him more than ever, and they knew that the Lord had indeed given him an understanding heart.

Far away over the hills and across the desert of Arabia was a country called Sheba. The Queen of Sheba was a very beautiful woman and rumors of the grandeur and magnificence of Solomon's court and the wisdom of the king had been carried even to that distant country. The Queen did not believe these stories, so she called her lords and ladies together and said to them:

"I will go myself and see if all these things are true."

When the royal guest had seen all the things which revealed the glory of King Solomon—his fine buildings, his ivory throne, his golden table, his courtiers, his many servants and his stately temple, she said to the king:

"It is true, all that I have heard of thy glory and wisdom and majesty, but I could not believe it till I saw with my own eyes. But behold, the half has never been told. Happy are they that minister in thy courts. Happy are the people over whom thou rulest, and blessed be the Lord thy God who hath set thee on the throne of Israel."

Then she made a present to the king of all that she had brought with her, the gold, the spices and the precious stones. She had no words to express her thoughts when she had seen it all—the palace, the temple, the ivory stairway which led up to it. She called her ladies and her servants about her, and when the king had loaded her with gifts, she set out on her long journey back to her own country.

Solomon was a man of culture. He had a taste for architecture, for poetry and music. He was shrewd also. Nothing escaped him. He had a great knowledge of men. He was not merely a man of wise and witty sayings. He knew how to apply his knowledge and wisdom to the practical affairs of his kingdom. He became a wealthy king. The new division of the country which he had made, did away in a large measure with the old tribal jealousies.

But the fate of nearly all great kings awaited Solomon. The fact that the king himself was wealthy did not mean that the people were. In the building of

his royal palaces and the keeping up of his court the people began to feel themselves oppressed. The king drew heavily upon their resources. He interfered with their freedom and forced them to labor on those buildings whether they wished to or not. They became sorely vexed and dissatisfied. They felt that they were forced to keep up the splendor of their king's court at too great a cost. To such acts as these on the part of their kings, many of the ancient nations can trace their decline and fall.

QUESTIONS

What happened to Solomon when he went to Gibeon to offer a sacrifice?

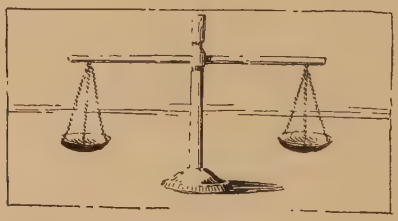
What did he wish for?

How did he decide the quarrel between the two mothers?

Who was a very famous woman who came to visit Solomon?

What were some of the king's other characteristics?

In what way did he resemble the kings of other ancient nations?



THE TWENTY-THIRD STORY

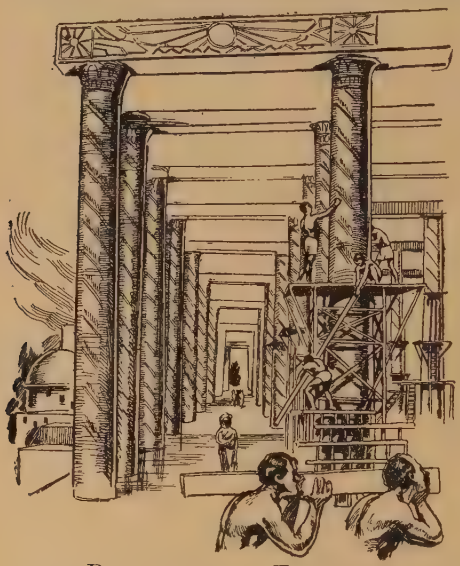
BUILDING A TEMPLE

ING DAVID had long wished to build a temple. He was not content that the Ark of God should have only a tabernacle to rest in while he himself was living in a palace. You know that the tabernacle was nothing but a tent and could easily be moved from place to place. David wished to build a temple at Jerusalem where the Ark might be placed and from which it should never be moved again. But Nathan, the prophet, had told him that the Lord would not allow him to build the temple because he had been a man of war. God's House should be built by his son, who was to be a man of peace.

It stood on the Holy Hill facing the east. In front was the great altar cut out of the rock in the side of the hill. Here they offered the sacrifices. Beside the altar was a great basin or tank. It held so many thousand gallons of water that they called it the sea. It rested on the backs of twelve huge, brass oxen who stood facing outward, three toward the east, three toward the north, three toward the west, three toward the south. The water in the basin was that used by the priests in the temple services, and it was carried

to them by means of ten great bowls of brass which could be moved only when placed on wheels.

There was an outer chamber to the temple called the Holy Place, and an inner chamber called the Holy of Holies. There were many other rooms also for the use of the priests and in which were kept the sacred water vessels and the other things used in the temple. On one side of the entrance was a tall pillar of brass. It was carved at the top into the shape of lilies and pomegranates. The temple itself was built of stone, but the walls inside were lined with cedar and the cedar was beautifully carved in patterns of open flowers, palm trees, running vines and winged angels. The main room, which was called the Holy Place, was about sixty feet long and thirty feet wide. The floor was of cypress wood. The windows were high up in the walls and did not let in much light. There was nothing in this room except the altar where the incense burned night and day, the table on which was the shew bred, which could be used only by the priests, and the great golden candlesticks.



BUILDING THE TEMPLE.

PAINTING BY EZRA WINTER

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THE DEDICATION OF SOLOMON'S TEMPLE.

The inner room, the Holy of Holies, was dark. It was thirty feet square. Its walls were cedar, overlaid with gold. In this room was kept the Ark of the Lord. The open court in front of the temple and the Holy Place were the real places of worship for the people. Only the high priest could enter the Holy of Holies—the dwelling-place of the Lord. This room was shut off from the Holy Place by folding doors. Here were two figures of angels, carved of olive wood and nearly three times as tall as a man. The tips of two of their wings touched each other, and the tips of the other two touched the outside walls. Underneath these figures rested the Ark—that sacred chest which Moses made and Joshua carried into battle, which David had brought to the Holy City, and within which rested the two tables of stone on which were written the Ten Commandments. It is no wonder that when the Queen of Sheba saw all these things she exclaimed:

"The half has never been told!"

It took seven years to build the temple. Day after day and year after year, the workmen built in silence and finally all was complete. When it was finished, it was dedicated with a great festival. The grandest religious ceremony described in the Bible is the dedication of Solomon's temple. One of the great Jewish feasts was called the Feast of the Tabernacles, and the king decided to dedicate the temple when it came time for this festival. The Promised Land was a small country, but the people came flocking to Jerusalem from all directions, and it is said that five million were present at this great festival where God

sent down the fire from Heaven to consume the sacrifice.

Thousands of sacrifices were offered on this day. The sacred Ark was moved for the last time from the tabernacle to its final resting-place in the temple. The king himself made the prayer and spoke at the great festival. The festival lasted many days, and at the end, Solomon spoke these words:

"Lord, I have built Thee an house of habitation,
A place for Thee to dwell in forever."

Solomon made for Israel her Golden Age, but toward the end of his life he forgot the last words of his father—"My son, with all thy getting, get understanding." Solomon reigned for forty years only to learn that neither wealth nor wisdom can bring happiness or success to him who does not obey the laws of God. He did many things during his reign which brought down upon him the wrath of his people by whom, in his early years, he had been greatly loved.

QUESTIONS

Why had David been forbidden to build the temple?

Where was the place which was selected for the temple to stand?

Why was this spot chosen?

Who was the architect?

How were the lumber and the stone obtained?

At what time was the temple dedicated?

What part did the king take in this ceremony?

THE TWENTY-FOURTH STORY

SOLOMON IN ALL HIS GLORY

REAT writers tell us that in the story of every people there is a period known as the Golden Age. It was the age of Pericles in Greece. It was when Augustus was monarch of Rome. It was during the days of Lorenzo de Medici in Florence. It was while Louis XIV was King in France. It was when Queen Elizabeth ruled in England. So, also, Israel had her Golden Age, and it was while Solomon, the son of David, the shepherd-king, ruled over the Chosen People.

Solomon determined that his kingdom should be the greatest and richest on earth, and that he should so live as to make the words of the Lord come true:

"There shall be no other king on earth like unto thee."

The first thing he did was to take for his wife the daughter of the Pharaoh of Egypt. The marriage was not a happy one. The Princess could not give up her own way of living nor her own religious faith. She was always a stranger among the people of Israel. But one thing this marriage did for Solomon. It placed him on an equal footing with the ruler of Egypt and the other kings. Thereafter he had to

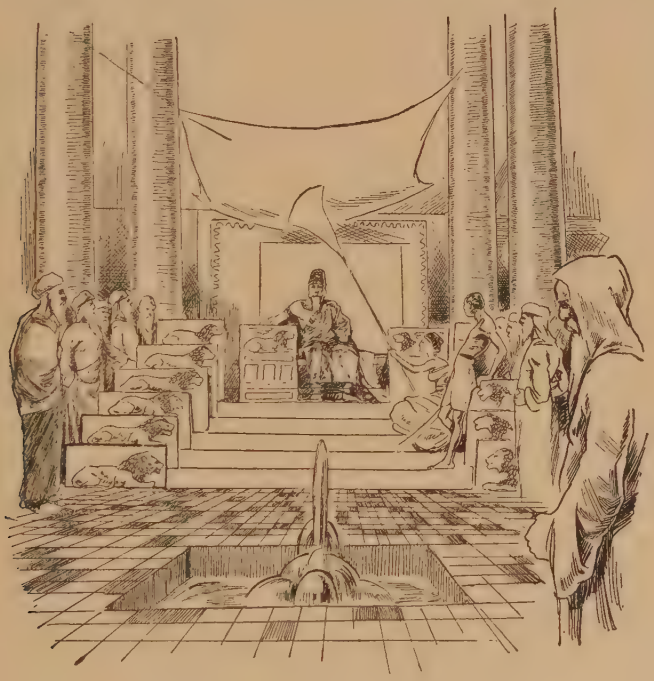
deal with them as they dealt with each other. While they were apparently friendly, each was secretly suspicious of the other. None trusted his neighbor.

The marriage of Solomon made Israel much more important as a nation than it had been before, and when the people all united in a great welcome to the young Egyptian Princess, they were glad that their forefather's had gone to Samuel, the prophet and demanded that he provide them with a king who should make their nation the equal of all the others.

The great glory of David as a king had been that he had fought with and conquered the enemies of Israel on all sides. It was the pride and glory of Solomon that he reigned peacefully over this great territory, and that the chiefs of every tribe and nation acknowledged him as their king. The Philistines, the Moabites, the Ammonites, the Edomites, all those who had made David's reign a period of warfare, troubled Solomon not at all. The provinces in Syria, which had been conquered by David, now paid tribute to Solomon. Except Damascus, the most ancient city in Syria, all Palestine obeyed the king of Israel. Solomon brought peace and good government to the nations and tribes which his father had conquered in battle.

The years of peace during the reign of Solomon, following as they did the long years of warfare, did much toward the prosperity of the kingdom. The people were naturally thrifty and industrious, and as the men of the nation no longer had to go to battle, they stayed at home and gave their time to the cultivation of the land. The population of Israel nearly

doubled during the first few years of Solomon's reign. The wealth of the people increased faster still. There was employment for everybody. For the first time in her history, Israel dwelt in peace and plenty, and as they never lost their belief that they were the



Splendor of Solomon's Court.

Chosen People of the Lord, they saw the hand of God in their prosperity and success.

The Lord gave to Solomon so much of His own wisdom that he has always been called the wisest of men. In addition to the building of his palaces and temple, and while he always kept a watchful eye on

the growth of his kingdom, Solomon, like David, found time to be a writer.

The Song of Solomon is supposed to have been written in his youth, the Proverbs in his manhood, and the Ecclesiastes in his old age. We are all familiar with the Proverbs of Solomon and they are well worth thinking about. These are some of them:

A soft answer turneth away wrath, but grievous words stir up anger.

A merry heart maketh a cheerful countenance.

He that ruleth his own spirit is better than he that taketh a city.

Evil communications corrupt good manners.

A good name is rather to be chosen than great riches.

The years went by. All the great works which Solomon had planned were carried out. The palaces and the temple, on which that army of men had labored for more than seven years, were finished. The temple was dedicated to the Lord. The workmen returned to their own country. The king of Tyre received his reward. Solomon gave him twenty cities in the province of Galilee. When the buildings were all done and the men had gone back home, Solomon rested from his labors. The Lord renewed to him the promise He had made to David, but Solomon, like Saul, received a warning that if he continued to walk in the ways of the Lord he would be rewarded with blessings and prosperity, but that disobedience would surely bring about the ruin of both his people and himself.

QUESTIONS

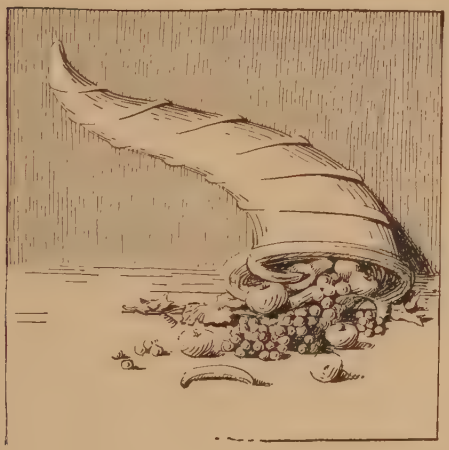
What were some of the Golden Ages?

What was the Golden Age of Israel?

What effect did Solomon's marriage with the Egyptian Princess have upon Israel as a nation?

What was one great difference between the reign of Solomon and that of David?

In what condition was the kingdom during the last years of his reign?



THE TWENTY-FIFTH STORY

THE FOLLIES AND FAILURES OF A KING

LONG years before, when the people of Israel had gone to Samuel and had demanded that he make them a king, he had told them some of the things a king would do. They would not believe him, but Solomon was the very kind of a king against whom Samuel had warned them. He had told them that a king would not serve the people, but that the people would have to serve the king, and if any of them had been living in the days of Solomon, they would have realized that Samuel spoke truly.

With all his outward magnificence, Solomon as a king was a failure. He had inherited a kingdom in good order. He was a man of great natural gifts, but he yielded to base temptations and failed to use his gifts to meet the obligations of a king. The wise king fell into the paths of folly and became more and more of a sham. His kingdom was only a show kingdom. It was all right on the outside, but within the people were angry and dissatisfied. There has been many a king who has had the same experience as Solomon. Underneath the glitter and the splendor were heard the cries and groans of an oppressed people.

One of the things Solomon had done was to marry many wives. Some of these marriages were made for the reason that he hoped if he married the daughters of other kings and rulers, the latter would never make war upon him. But the king's household grew and grew till it became an enormous thing. The Book

Solomon's Follies and Failures.

of Kings tells that Solomon had seven hundred wives and that there belonged to the household about three hundred others and many slave girls, about a thousand in all. Many of Solomon's wives were not of his own people. They did not believe in the religion of Israel. So the king not only allowed them to keep up the worship of their own gods, but he built them

temples and shrines out on the mountain-sides and at last got so that he worshiped their false gods with them. The people were naturally both angry at and ashamed of their king. He was setting them a bad example.

So the years went by. Solomon became a very idle king. He spent his time with his idle wives and fell more and more into their customs. He did not cease to offer sacrifices in the temple on the days of the great feasts, but it had become a formal act. The true religion of his fathers had died out of his heart and left it empty. On the high hill east of Jerusalem, he built three altars for his wives and went there with them to worship their idols.

One night Solomon had a dream. The Lord came to him and told him what he would do. He would put out his glory and cast his crown down to the earth. His kingdom should be taken from him and given to one of his servants. This servant was Jeroboam, whose duty it had been to collect the taxes, and force the men of Israel to labor in the forest and stone quarries.

Jeroboam was a member of the tribe of Ephraim. He remembered how strong his people had once been, and the people of Shiloh also, where the Ark of the Lord had rested for so long. Now it was the tribe of Judah, David's tribe, which received all the favors and which the king neither taxed nor forced to labor. It was Jerusalem now, instead of Shiloh, which was the Holy Place. Jeroboam was patriotic. He was indignant, too, when he saw the woes of the people. Perhaps he was ambitious, but surely he would never

have thought of trying to be king had it not been for something which happened to him.

One day as he went out from Jerusalem collecting taxes he met a man from Shiloh whom he knew. It was the prophet Ahijah. Since the death of Samuel he had been looked upon by the people as one of those messengers who went abroad in the land and carried the words of the Lord to the people. He, too, was sorrowful because the Ark had been taken from Shiloh to Jerusalem, but he said nothing of that to Jeroboam. When he met him on the road, in the open country, he spoke to him the words of the Lord. Ahijah wore a new robe. Suddenly he took it off, tore it into twelve pieces, gave Jeroboam ten of the pieces and told him that ten of the twelve tribes should be taken away from Solomon and given to him—that he should be ruler over them, and that if he served the Lord, He would establish him upon the throne. The words of the prophet came true but not until after Solomon was dead. Only the tribes of Judah and Benjamin remained faithful. The men of Judah could never forget David, their hero and king, and for that reason they would not forsake his son. Moreover, even as the Lord had told David that not he, but his son, should build the temple, so also had He told Solomon that not he himself, but his son, should see the destruction of the kingdom of Israel.

News of what the prophet had said was carried to Solomon, and made him fear Jeroboam more than any other aspirant. He tried to put him to death, but Jeroboam fled into Egypt. He was protected by the Pharaoh, and waited for a chance to return to

Jerusalem. At last the chance came. Solomon died. He could not have been an old man in years for he was but a youth when he was crowned. He had been king for forty years, and he was old as every man is old who has outlived his usefulness and denied his faith. The last years of his life were haunted by the feeling that his own misdeeds had robbed his children of their inheritance. He had spent all the treasure his father had left him. He had made enemies of his people. When it came time for him to die he left his sons to reap the reward of his own evil doings. He was buried in Jerusalem, the City of David, not far from the tomb where his father slept, and with Solomon was buried the glory as well as the unity of Israel. How sad to think of the last days of Solomon, that ideal son of David, who was given wisdom from God to rule over the Chosen People and who failed so miserably!

QUESTIONS

Who was it who told the people of Israel, many years before, some of the things a king would do?

Was he right?

In what way did Solomon fail as a king?

How many wives did Solomon have?

How many others belonged to his household?

Were his wives of his own people?

Why was Jeroboam an enemy to Solomon?

Where did he go when the king tried to kill him?

How old was Solomon when he died?

How long had he reigned over Israel?

Was he really a great king?

THE TWENTY-SIXTH STORY

A KINGDOM DIVIDED AGAINST ITSELF

OLOMON was dead. He had been king in Jerusalem for forty years, but now he slept in the City of David and his young son Rehoboam reigned in his stead. Rehoboam was a weak man. Even if he had come into such a kingdom as his father had inherited he would not have had character enough to manage it. But still he was Solomon's son, the grandson of the great King David, so all the people of Israel came to Shechem to make Rehoboam king.

Away over in Egypt, Jeroboam heard of Solomon's death. He came back. He gathered up all the angry people he could get to follow him and they went to see Rehoboam, the new king. When they came before him, Jeroboam spoke for them, saying:

"Thy father made our burden heavier than we could bear. Do you lighten it, O king, and we will all serve thee even as we served thy father Solomon."

Rehoboam did not reply at first. He asked them to go away and come back again in three days so that he might have time to think about the matter and to take counsel with his ministers. The people did as he requested. They went away quietly and when they

had gone, Rehoboam called to him his ministers, the old men of his court who had been with his father and said to them:

"What is your advice? What shall I say to the people when they come again?"

Now the advice which the ministers gave was just the kind of advice which older men always give to young ones. They said to the new king:

"Hear our counsel. If thou wilt be a good servant to the people and will answer them with kindness and make them love thee, they will serve thee faithfully forever."

But Rehoboam would not listen to the advice of the old men. He called together the young men, his own friends, with whom he had grown up, and said to them:

"The people have come to me with Jeroboam and have said, 'Make the yoke lighter than thy father hath put upon us.' What answer shall I make to the people who have said this to me?"

And the young men spoke to Rehoboam and said:

"Do not hearken to the complaints of the people. When they come again say thou unto them, 'My father hath made your yoke heavy. I will add to your yoke. My father chastised you with whips, but I will chastise you with scorpions!' "

Rehoboam did as the young men advised him. When Jeroboam and the people came again on the third day he forsook the counsel of the old men who had been his father's friends and spoke to the people roughly. He told them that he would do even worse than his father. If the taxes had been heavy while

his father lived, he would make them heavier. If they had been forced to labor unwillingly for his father, they should work harder for him. If they had been punished with whips by his father, he would lash them with scorpions, which were whips divided into many lashes and on the end of each lash was a sharp barb.

When Jeroboam and the people heard the king's reply they were very angry. They remembered the good King David and thought how different his son and his grandson were from him. They swore to be revenged on David's house. Each man of them departed to his home.

THE PROPHET PREDICTING THE DIVISION OF THE KINGDOM.

Then it was that the words which the prophet had spoken to Jeroboam came true. Ten of the twelve tribes of Israel forsook Rehoboam and followed after Jeroboam. Only Judah, and little Benjamin which seldom was mentioned, remained faithful.

It would not be quite right to look upon the breaking up of the united kingdom of Israel as entirely the fault of Rehoboam. The cruel and insulting answer he had given the people when they came to him peacefully and ready to promise their loyal support

was only the immediate cause. The kingdom of Israel is just like the other ancient nations. Each has passed through its period of youth, of maturity, of decay. When we see a great oak tree in the forest, we do not often stop to think that perhaps it has stood there a thousand years. No one can tell when or by whom the tiny acorn from which it grew was planted, nor when the tree first put forth its green leaves. These things do not come in a night, and it is just so with the great wars and revolutions which go to make up the world's history. Some one plants a tiny seed of discontent in the hearts of the people. It grows till it becomes too large to exist within its own bounds. Then the people begin to complain and finally the complaint becomes anarchy and war. This is the story of every revolution since the world began, also that first great revolution which took place in Heaven. It was just so with the kingdom of Israel. Its destruction was not the result of a day, but of many, many years.

So this is the story of the Chosen People from the time when they demanded of Samuel a king until their kingdom fell. The things against which Samuel had warned them had all come to pass. The kingdom of David, with all its promise, had lasted barely two generations, but let us not forget that from David was descended the Great King who, nearly a thousand years later, was born in Bethlehem.

QUESTIONS

Who became king after the death of Solomon?
What kind of a man was he?

Why did the people make him king, and where was he crowned?

What had Jeroboam been doing while he had been hiding in Egypt?

When he heard of the death of Solomon what did he do?

What did Rehoboam reply to Jeroboam's request?

What advice did the older ministers give the king?

What did the younger ones advise?

Which cousel did Rehoboam accept?

What did the people do when they heard the king's reply?

Was the breaking up of the kingdom of Israel entirely the fault of Rehoboam?

How long did the kingdom of David endure?

What fact about David should we never allow ourselves to forget?

CHAPTER XXVII

THE SON OF SOLOMON

IMAGINE a broad, majestic river suddenly dividing into two turbulent branches, and you have a picture of the divided Hebrew nation after the death of Solomon. The men of Israel, in reply to the insolent speech of Rehoboam, turned a bold front to the king and asked: "What portion have we in David? Neither have we inheritance in the Son of Jesse." And they passed the war-cry down the line, "Every man to your tents, O Israel!" As they marched away they shouted back, "Now see to thine own house, David!"

In order to put down this open defiance inspired by the leadership of Jeroboam, the young king, Rehoboam, hastened to raise an army of one hundred and eighty thousand men with which to force the Israelites back into the kingdom. Perhaps neither side stopped to give a thought to the disasters which would follow such a conflict.

At that critical time, heathen nations were closely watching the envied empire of David and Solomon. The old enemy, Egypt, lay to the south, always craftily alert. On the north was a large body of people living in Syria, and to the east were the changing

powers of Babylon and Assyria. Besides, there were the smaller, but equally threatening, foes called Philistines, Ammonites, Edomites, and others, all of whom would rejoice to make of the Hebrew land a common battle-ground.

In the midst of Rehoboam's elaborate preparations, the prophet Shemaiah came in. The prophets had a way of appearing on important occasions. That they were not always welcome made no difference. Neither king nor queen overawed them. On this occasion the prophet came to put a stop to the whole undertaking. "Ye shall not go up, nor fight against your brethren," he commanded. "Return every man to his house," and he named his authority by saying, "Thus saith Jehovah."

We are not told how Rehoboam liked this interference which broke up his fine army. It seems that when the soldiers heard about the command they quickly departed for their homes, leaving Rehoboam without an army. It is likely that the officers saw how willing the king was to give up the war on a good pretext. Like his father Solomon, he was a man of peace.

The humbled Rehoboam had been given his first lesson, and he set to work to profit by it. Instead of wasting his time in useless regrets, he started in to rule his people well. There were still great advantages in Judah. It was the tribe of promise, and there was Jerusalem with her priceless treasures and high associations.

The king turned oftener to old counselors than to the giddy young men, at this time. It was a wise head

that mapped out before him the dangers lying around defenseless little Judah, and the great need of fortified cities to protect the frontier and to hold commanding positions.

ISRAELITES LEAVING REHOBOAM WITH WAR CRY.

The work of strengthening the reduced kingdom was promptly begun. Walled cities with strong breast-works and high towers appeared, here and there, throughout the realm. On the south, where at-

tacks were most likely to take place, a line of walled towns was completed. In all these the king stored large quantities of provisions in case of a siege, and weapons of warfare, such as shields and spears. As his sons grew older, he wisely placed them as rulers over the principal cities, so as to make of the kingdom one large household.

Three years of prosperity followed. It was not long before it became known throughout Israel, and other neighboring lands, that Rehoboam was giving his people peace and plenty, and many came flocking in from less favored regions. His kingdom was made stronger and better by an additional number of priests and Levites, who came to be near Jerusalem, and to escape the religious changes in Israel.

It would be pleasant to close the story of Rehoboam right here. His youthful folly had received its own punishment, and he had profited by the experience. But the sins of Solomon were again coming to the surface in the life of his son.

After this period of success when all was going well, it gradually came to the king that he could manage his kingdom without the Lord's priest and prophet. A desire grew in his heart for the heathen gods with which he had become familiar as a child. Like many later kings, he looked with favor on many gods with a view to greater security. The result was, that before many years, something very much like idol-worship was established in Judah. Then came the disastrous experience which showed Rehoboam how weak and helpless he was when he turned to heathen gods.

In the fifth year of his reign a heavy war-cloud came up in the south. It was from Egypt, for the Egyptians had set themselves in battle array. What the reason for this was we are not told, but hardly an excuse was needed in those days for a stronger nation to attack a weaker.

Shishak, the ruler of Egypt, came up into Judah with a splendid army of Egyptians, Lydians, Arabs and Ethiopians. The Bible tells us that he had twelve hundred chariots, sixty thousand horsemen, and infantry without number. The walled cities, so carefully fortified, fell before the conquering army as it swept on north to Jerusalem.

This was the time for the prophet's voice to be heard. The princes had fled from the cities as Shishak's army advanced, and had hastened to Jerusalem, to the king. The prophet came before this princely company with the stern message, "Thus saith Jehovah, ye have forsaken me, therefore, have I left you in the hands of Shishak." Jerusalem was terror-stricken, and the king and princes humbly cried out, "Jehovah is righteous."

But their penitence came too late. Shishak appeared before Jerusalem, and the gates were opened to him. He rudely entered the sacred temple, and the king's palace, and seized the treasures of gold and silver. The famous shields of gold made by Solomon he carried away. He spared the city but imposed a tribute on Judah, and loaded with wealth, he marched back to Egypt with a long line of captives following.

On the walls of the old temple of Karnak in Egypt,

is an inscription in hieroglyphics, which enthusiastic guides always point out to sightseers. These characters are now understood and the world may read today what Shishak so proudly inscribed nearly three thousand years ago. Not only does he give the names of the cities which he took in this invasion, but the record is made doubly convincing by showing sculptured figures of Hebrew captives.

Rehoboam was left weak and discouraged. He continued to rule over his reduced kingdom twelve years longer, but the glory had left Judah and Jerusalem. The tribute paid to Egypt was a humiliation, and the brass and copper vessels used in the temple, instead of the gold and silver ones which were beautifying and enriching Egypt, were a constant reminder of defeat and misfortune.

Rehoboam's rule lasted only seventeen years, and in that time his kingdom had been reduced from a powerful nation commanding the attention of the world, to a feeble vassal tribe.

QUESTIONS

Who was Rehoboam?

What was his great mistake?

Were Judah and Israel ready to enter on a destructive war?

To what measures of safety did Rehoboam wisely apply his energies?

After a few years of prosperity, what change took place in the king?

How was he punished?

CHAPTER XXVIII

THE LEADER OF THE NORTH

HE story of how Jeroboam came to the throne of Israel is an interesting one. Like Saul and David, he had lived his boyhood days among common people as one of them, surrounded by everyday occupations. The glory and heavy cares of kingship had not yet appeared to him.

Our first view of him is in the time of Solomon, when that splendor-loving monarch was exacting exorbitant taxes and services from his subjects, in order to meet the heavy expenses of his extravagant court. The most industrious and energetic men of the empire were selected for overseers or taskmasters, to see that the people did all that was required of them. Jeroboam was recommended to the king as "a mighty man of valor among the Israelites," and he was appointed taskmaster over the house of Joseph. Solomon little dreamed what would come of it. To Jeroboam it was the chance to see the real oppression of his tribesmen, and to them it became a proof of his ability to lead and rule.

The startling revelation came to Solomon that, on account of his sinful course, the kingdom would be

divided after his death, and his son would rule over the southern part alone. At the same time the prophet made known to Jeroboam that he was to become ruler over the northern tribes.

We can imagine that Jeroboam was both surprised and overjoyed at this promise. That he, a common man, should rule over a part of Solomon's splendid kingdom, was indeed wonderful. He grew eager to enter on the work at once, and began conspiring with his tribesmen, although the prophet had plainly stated that it was not to be during Solomon's life.

But the king in his royal capital at Jerusalem had spies in Israel, who kept a sharp watch on that restless people and it was not long before he discovered what Jeroboam was about. To remain longer in Israel would mean speedy conviction and death, and so Jeroboam, the impatient plotter, fled for his life.

In that day as in later times, when a person of importance was threatened with death by his king, he would seek refuge with the king of some unfriendly country. Jeroboam fled to Egypt, whose ruler, Shishak, received him with open arms. He was ready to protect anyone, who seemed to endanger the strong empire over which the envied Solomon ruled.

The splendid promise to Jeroboam became well known throughout Israel, and the people made haste to call him home about the time of Solomon's death. Then followed the appearance of Israel headed by Jeroboam before the new king Rehoboam, the royal threat, and the angry departure of the Israelites. Their next move was to anoint Jeroboam king of Israel.

The future opened up royally to Jeroboam. Not only had he, most unexpectedly, been selected to become king of Israel, but the Lord had sent to him a promise of divine help. "Only walk in my ways and do that which is right in my sight and I will be with thee and establish thy family," God had promised him.

One would think that such a promise from the Lord of the universe to a man, without even a princely claim, would call forth his highest effort. He could look back, in his nation's history, at a long line of noble men who had been called with a promise. Abraham, Jacob, Joseph, Moses, Samuel, Saul, David, Solomon and others had been honored by God. What a royal company to be in! Was Jeroboam to pattern after David or after Saul?

At any rate, he was not indolent. With the energy of the days when he was known as "a man of valor," he began to strengthen his possessions. Naturally, Shechem received his first attention. That place where his kingship had been determined, he made his capital and stronghold. We can see how small were the two kingdoms with their capitals only thirty-two miles apart. His next activity was to build up and fortify Penuel to protect his possessions across the Jordan. This was the place which Jacob, so long before, had called Peniel, a word meaning "the face of God."

But above the interest of fortifications, a very natural perplexity arose in the king's mind. Here were the two divisions of the Hebrew people with two governments, but with one church. The great centre

of their religion was Jerusalem, where all Hebrews were expected to go at stated times. But this city was also the capital of Judah, and the king of Israel became anxious about his government.

"If this people go up to offer sacrifices in the house of Jehovah at Jerusalem, then will the heart of this people turn to Rehoboam, king of Judah, and they will kill me and return to him," he said to himself.

A lack of faith in God's promises to him, we think; however, he was not the first, nor the last Hebrew monarch, to transfer his faith from God's promises to his own strength and power.

Jeroboam continued to dwell on this dark possibility, and considered it carefully with friends and advisers. Finally he made two golden calves which he set up, one in the extreme north at Dan, and the other in the south at Bethel, but thirteen miles from Jerusalem. Then the shrewd king assumed the role of one studying only the comforts and conveniences of his people.

"It is too much for you to go up to Jerusalem," he said to the people. "Behold thy gods, O Israel, which brought thee up out of the land of Egypt."

The Levites and the priesthood felt outraged, and many left to live in Judah under Rehoboam.

Nothing daunted, this original king set to work to appoint a new priesthood.

The first celebration of his new feast-day had come, when a startling occurrence took place. The king stood near the altar before the golden calf at Bethel, ready to offer sacrifice, when a prophet's voice was heard, who denounced the worship, and foretold how

priests' bones should be burnt on this altar. "Behold," he exclaimed, "the altar shall be rent, and the ashes upon it shall be poured out."

Indignant at this interruption in the work which did not belong to the prophet, the king put out his hand with kingly authority, and commanded, "Lay hold on him."

Jeroboam had taken one step too far. His hand was withered and he was powerless to move it. True to the prophet's saying, the altar was rent, and the ashes poured out.

The bold, self-confident king was frightened and helpless. "Entreat now the face of the Lord thy God, that my hand may be restored to me again," he pleaded. His prayer was answered, and he was given a fresh trial.

As this warning did not change the course of the king, a worse punishment came to him later, and like many misfortunes, it came when he was least expecting it.

Israel and her king prospered in their new independent way. They had held their own against Judah and other nations. By this time, Jeroboam had begun to surround himself with more beauty and luxury. Old Shechem was poorly situated, so he transferred the national capital, and his kingly home to Tirzah, an old city which Joshua and the children of Israel had captured. One writer calls this city "the beautiful, amidst cultivated fruit and olive-clad hills, upon a swelling height, with glorious outlook over the hills and valleys of rich Samaria."

Amid such beautiful surroundings the greatest sor-

row of his life found him. His son, Abijah, the crown-prince on whom the hope of the nation rested, was lying at the point of death. He was a youth of high promise, and to him the people were looking forward for a worthy king.

QUEEN OF ISRAEL IN PROPHET'S DOORWAY.

Jeroboam called the queen and mother of the sick boy. "Arise, and disguise thyself," he said to her, "that thou be not known to be the wife of Jeroboam,

and get thee to Shiloh. There is Ahijah the prophet, who spake concerning me that I should be king over this people, and he will tell thee what shall become of the child." To complete the disguise, he instructed her to take only the customary offering of ten loaves, and cakes, and a cruse of honey, with which any ordinary person would appear before a prophet.

But before the queen appeared, the prophet knew all about the case, even though his eyes were set with age, so that he could not see. When he heard her footstep at the door, he called to her, "Come in, thou wife of Jeroboam; why feignest thou thyself to be another?"

After this blunt reception of his royal guest, the prophet gave the judgment in as brief terms. The death of the son would take place upon her return home, he told her, but this was not the only hard declaration he had to make. Jeroboam's day of reckoning had come. Not only was the crown-prince to die, but the present royal family was to be utterly destroyed. Not one male child should be left to carry on the succession.

The judgment thus given came swift and sure. The closing scene of Jeroboam's life is full of dramatic interest.

The forces of Israel and Judah were arrayed against each other in bitter warfare. There had been many hostile meetings in a random way, since the separation, but now that Abijam had succeeded his father Rehoboam as king of Judah, the struggle became more intense, and a decisive battle was at hand.

On the side of Judah was Abijam with four

hundred thousand chosen men, and Jeroboam led Israel with just twice the number "of mighty men of valor." It must have been an imposing spectacle as they appeared facing each other.

In those days of hand-to-hand conflict, it was possible for hostile armies to be very close together without immediate danger to either. We remember how the giant Goliath appeared every day before the camp of the trembling Israelites, challenging any man of courage to come out to fight with him. On this occasion, Abijam of Judah took his place on a near-by elevation, and delivered a fierce denunciation before the army of the Israelites.

While Abijam was giving his masterly oration, Jeroboam with the skill of an able general, drew off a part of his army, and laid an ambush behind the enemy, so that when Judah awoke to the situation, the army of Israel was both before and behind them.

The battle-plan of Jeroboam was a perfect one, and his failure to crush Judah was due to the interference of Providence. Strong and capable leader though he was, he suffered a terrible defeat. The battle proceeded, the priests sounded with their trumpets the death-knell of Jeroboam's army, and half a million of his chosen men were killed.

Jeroboam never recovered his power, and two years later he died, in what manner we do not know. The Bible says, "Jehovah smote him and he died." Not because he was unusually wicked and cruel, but because he led the people back to the worship of images, this remarkable man became a standing reproach in the history of Israel's kings.

QUESTIONS

When do we first hear of Jeroboam?

How does he impress you?

Did the Israelites seem to have a just cause which they laid before Rehoboam?

What did God promise Jeroboam?

What became a great worry to king Jeroboam?

Was he an independent, original king?

Where did many of his best priests go?

CHAPTER XXIX

BUILDERS OF THE NATION

A NEW king had now come to the throne of Judah, a mere youth, but he was enough like his great-grandfather Solomon to give the people a new hope.

His father Abijam who had just died, brought the nation little of value during his reign of three years. A decided victory over Israel had been won, but that was due to the help of Providence, and not to his own skill.

On the other hand, Abijam had succeeded in widening the gulf between the two little kingdoms of Judah and Israel, and besides, he had allowed the idols of his father Rehoboam to become more familiar to the people. Into such a state of affairs stepped the young king, Asa.

He took up the work dropped by his father, but in a new way. Higher principle and purer religion guided his life from the first.

We can picture him as a boy in the royal household, looking with displeasure on the foreign gods set up in the sacred city, and burning with zeal to destroy them. He was under the authority of others then, and could do nothing but talk over matters with his good mother, who afterwards helped him rule.

The time had come when he could act. Armed with kingly authority he began his work of reform. Neither high nor low were overlooked in his sweeping reform. Even his grandmother, the famous queen-mother, Maacah, was not spared. This woman, of such great influence, had made a degrading idol rightly called a "horror." This image was used in the worship of a repulsive Phoenician goddess. The king destroyed this idol, crushing and burning it, and strewing the remains on the river Kidron. In this fierce way he showed his utter contempt for such vile worship.

But he did not stop there. He went so far as to take from the queen-mother the exalted rank which she had so long enjoyed. As a princess, both by the line of David, and Tolmai, king of Geshur, she had stood very high socially, and this must have been a severe blow to the aged idolatress.

Asa kept up his efforts to sweep his kingdom clean of idolatry. But, in one ancient custom, he ran up against the wishes of the people. The "high places," so often mentioned in the Bible, were places where the people had worshipped and sacrificed when they found it inconvenient to go up to the temple. The result was, that they became attached to those neighboring altars, which saved them so many long walks to Jerusalem. King Asa tried to do away with them, but he did not quite succeed. The "high places" remained, and the more helpful temple worship was joined in only on rare occasions.

Besides the hated idols, another sight had hurt his pride. From his childhood up, he had seen brass in

the temple service instead of gold. The people needed no other mark to remind them of that great disaster, the invasion of Shishak of Egypt. No doubt, Rehoboam winced at sight of the change as long as he lived. We are told that Abijam had been enough concerned to set aside gold and precious vessels for the temple. Asa took up the work with more zeal, and in the fifteenth year of his reign, when he had secured enough golden vessels, he had a formal dedication of them for the temple use.

The old altar in the porch of the temple, which he had probably seen as a boy, received a share of his attention. It was a day of rejoicing to the good Hebrews when they saw the repaired altar, and the gold vessels about the temple.

A time of peace followed. There was the unusual rest of ten years free from war. Asa was no lover of war, but like a prudent king, he prepared for what would come, sooner or later. He built all kinds of fortifications in and around his cities, and made strong fences with gates and bars as protection. On the heavy walls around the city he built high towers, from which the men of war could watch an approaching enemy, and could send out arrows and hurl heavy projectiles. Besides, he raised an immense army consisting of three hundred thousand spearmen in Judah, and two hundred and eighty thousand bowmen in the part of Benjamin which belonged to his kingdom.

These preparations had been made none too soon. Judah was too prosperous not to attract the attention of the world. For Asa, as for Rehoboam, a heavy

war-cloud came up in the south. Zerah, an Egyptian, or Ethiopian, was advancing towards Judah with one of the largest armies mentioned in the Bible, consisting of one million fierce warriors and three hundred

Asa Praying before Hosts of Egypt.

chariots. Asa went out to oppose him, and the armies met in a valley in southwest Judah.

Asa was a brave man, but it was enough to make the bravest tremble to see this approaching multitude, as dense as a thick forest as far as eye could reach.

His own valiant army was as nothing in comparison, and it looked as if little Judah would be crushed, and her people again forced into Egyptian bondage. In this difficulty he turned to God, in one of the most beautiful prayers of Hebrew, or Christian, warrior-kings:

"Jehovah, there is none besides thee to help between the mighty and him that hath no strength; help us, O Jehovah our God; for we rely on thee, and in thy name are we now come against this multitude. O Jehovah, thou art our God; let not man prevail against thee."

God had honored such faith, and Asa was victorious. The enemy fled in utter confusion toward Egypt, followed by Asa and his army.

Old Egypt had such a lesson that day, that for three hundred and thirty years there were no more invasions by that power.

It was a great victory for Asa, and the return was a proud triumph. All Jerusalem was waiting to welcome him, and the danger was that this king, like others, would become vain-glorious.

But the prophet Azariah, true to his mission, met the king as he was hastening homeward. His errand was not so much to congratulate Asa, although even the prophet's heart must have swelled with national pride, as it was to remind him that the Lord had given him the victory.

The king became more religious in his day of prosperity. Most persons are affected just the other way. The celebration of the victory became a great religious

revival which filled all Judah. Perhaps such zeal had not been shown since the time of Samuel.

After enormous sacrifices of the spoil he had taken from the enemy, the king led the people in pledging the nation to seek the God of Israel. The Bible tells us that "they took an oath with a loud voice, and with shouting, and with trumpets, and with cornets. And all Judah rejoiced at the oath; for they had sworn with all their heart, and sought him with their whole desire."

A long peace followed lasting twenty years, for the nations stood in fear of this victorious leader. How Asa made use of such rare leisure, we do not know, but it appears that he was becoming more indifferent and indolent as year followed year without much change. The first part of his life might be called his rise, and the latter part, his decline.

Perhaps it was due to indolence and self-indulgence that the king was afflicted with a disease which seems to have been the gout. Whatever was the cause, he died after two years of severe suffering, in the forty-first year of his reign.

It had been a prosperous period. The people remembered all his services to Judah, and buried him in a splendid sepulcher in Jerusalem.

* * *

The twenty-five-year reign of Jehoshaphat stands out as a brief golden era of Judah's history. Asa's long and successful life had established and enriched the nation in many ways, and now came his son, with greater ability and more fixedness of purpose, to do a still greater work.

It would be interesting to have the story of Jehoshaphat as crown-prince. This well-known prince, who had reached the age of thirty-five before he became king, was much loved by the people. They delighted in showing him honor. Soon after he came to the throne all Judah brought him presents, so that he had riches and honor in abundance.

Jehoshaphat won the hearts of the other nations as well. Later in his reign when they saw how strong and righteous was his rule, instead of the usual practice of making war on him, the Philistines brought presents and tribute-money, and the Arabians brought large flocks of sheep and goats.

When we read what he did for Judah, we are not surprised that even Philistines and Arabs were attracted by this large-hearted king, who showed such fatherly interest in advancing the highest welfare of all his people.

Jehoshaphat was, above everything else, an organizer. It was his mission to set the little kingdom in fine working order. The fortifications of Judah were his first care. The defenses having been strengthened, the king made public his plans for the higher interests of the people. The king set about an educational reform. For this purpose he appointed five princes to be superintendents. Their work was probably to map out the courses, and direct the two priests and nine Levites, who were associated with them as teachers.

To build up and preserve a nation, in that day, without an imposing army would have been an impossibility. Jehoshaphat again made use of his splen-

did organizing ability by appointing five leaders to become generals of the five grand divisions of his army of about a million men. These were all quartered in Jerusalem, in close touch with the king.

Later in life, he set up a series of courts of justice, which might be copied, with advantage, today, if the king's accompanying instructions could be made effective.

To the judges of the minor courts in the fenced cities, he said, "Consider what ye do: for ye judge not for man, but for Jehovah; and he is with you in the judgment."

To the judges of the provincial courts, he said, "Thus shall ye do in the fear of Jehovah, faithfully, and with a perfect heart."

To the judges of the supreme court in Jerusalem, he said, "Deal courageously, and Jehovah be with the good."

In an evil hour the king made a fatal mistake, which did not so much affect him as it did the fate of Judah. He entered into an alliance with the wicked house of Israel, by consenting to a marriage between his son Jehoram and Athaliah, the young daughter of Ahab and Jezebel.

One step led to another. The two royal houses, so closely connected, opened up friendly social relations. Jehoshaphat, in some way, was influenced to visit Ahab in his court at Samaria. During this visit the two kings planned the unfortunate joint attack against Ben-hadad related in the story of Ahab and Jezebel. Here Ahab lost his life, and Jehoshaphat narrowly escaped.

The unsuccessful attack on Syria became known far and wide, and Jehoshaphat fell in the opinion of the tribes and nations. The king of Judah was not invincible then, they reasoned, and it cost him warfare to bring back the old conviction.

A fierce army of Moabites, Ammonites, and half-savages from beyond the Dead Sea, suddenly appeared in Judah, prepared to seize and plunder all that they could lay hands on. Messengers hurried to Jerusalem, and reported to the king exaggerated accounts of the multitudes of the enemy. Without doubt, they marched in a straggling way, covering hills and filling valleys, until they appeared numberless, to the frightened people.

The king, too, was struck with fear, but be turned to the Lord for help. His first step was to proclaim a national fast. The people responded at once, and they gathered from all the cities of Judah.

It must have been an impressive sight. The Bible says, "And all Judah stood before the Lord, with their little ones, their wives and their children." In the presence of this vast congregation, Jehoshaphat arose, and prayed a touching prayer of faith. The closing words are expressive of their complete dependence on God. "For we have no might against this great company that cometh against us; neither know we what to do; but our eyes are upon thee."

At this supreme moment the spirit of prophecy came upon one of the Levites. Hastening before the king and people, he gave the joyful word that Judah was to be victorious.

"Be not afraid, nor dismayed, by reason of this

great multitude," he said in a message from the Lord, "for the battle is not yours, but God's. Ye shall not need to fight in this battle," he further assured them; "set yourselves, stand ye still, and see the salvation of the Lord with you, O Judah and Jerusalem."

The king and the people fell on their faces before the Lord, in humble reverence, and the Levites "stood up to praise the Lord God of Israel with a loud voice on high."

The next day was the time for the promised victory, and early in the morning, they set out to meet the enemy. The world had never before seen such battle-array. At the head of the army the king placed the people who were to sing and give praise unto God.

"Give thanks unto Jehovah, for his lovingkindness endureth forever," was the refrain.

And the large army, probably unarmed, inspired with this exalted martial music, went out, with perfect confidence, to see the destruction of the enemy.

They were not disappointed. When they drew near the place where they expected to see a vast moving multitude, they found the whole land covered with dead bodies. The battle of the Lord had already been fought. It seems that the terrible slaughter was due to treachery of the enemy among themselves. Two divisions plotted against a third, with the result of a general massacre.

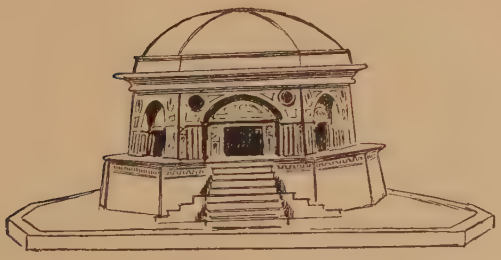
The work Judah found for them was to take up the rich spoil. This was so great that it occupied three days. Loaded with this splendid booty, on the following day they took up their return march. The king led the army, and with psalteries and harps and

trumpets they came to Jerusalem, to the house of God.

After this the nations again stood in awe of Jehoshaphat, and his realm was quiet. At the age of sixty he died, leaving an almost perfect record as king of Judah.

QUESTIONS

What was the character of King Asa?
What nation came against him?
What did he do when he saw the multitudes?
Did his victory make him vain?
What great mistake did he make later?
How old was Jehoshaphat when he came to the throne?
What was his principal work?
Did he make any mistake?
How was he helped in battle?



CHAPTER XXX

TWO BOLD USURPERS

HIGH above the noise and shouting of the battleground a voice rang out, "The king has been slain." The startling news swept like the wind down the line of the army of Israel. Many of the officers were evidently aware that such a crime was coming, but to the bulk of the army, it came as a shock.

It was not long before everyone knew why he had been murdered. Baasha, their chief officer, came before them as king, and it may be that he even took the pains to explain to them how necessary it was that the king should die, and why he had felt it his duty to commit the deed. Usurpers have done this in all ages.

Baasha, the new king, evidently felt his greater fitness for the place, and he soon proved that he was right. He seized the reins of public affairs with a vigorous hand. But first, he wanted to make sure that no descendant of Jeroboam would rise later to claim the throne.

Kings of that day were so selfish and cruel. Like others, he made himself and his family safe and secure, he thought, by killing every man and boy belonging to the family of Jeroboam.

This was exactly what the prophet had foretold to the wife of Jeroboam, when she came to him about her sick son.

If Baasha had brought in some religious reform, there would have been good reason for the change, but he followed close in the footsteps of Jeroboam and Nadab. Shameful practices of idolatry were becoming more and more common. The better class of priests fled to Judah, and the prophets of God looked on with horror.

These prophets were always watching the kings. One came to Baasha early in his reign, when he should have been glad to listen to warnings.

"The house of Baasha shall be like the house of Jeroboam," the prophet said. "Him that dieth of Baasha in the city, the dogs shall eat, and him that dieth of his in the fields, shall the fowls of the air eat."

But the king paid little heed to the mutterings of a mad prophet, as long as no danger was in sight.

Baasha ruled with a strong hand, and Israel was prospering. But the king was not entirely satisfied. Judah was to him the thorn in the flesh. There she lay on the south, little and insignificant looking, but with the great beacon-light of Jerusalem attracting the attention of the religious world. Judah's king had brought about such reforms that it was heralded throughout Israel how pure religion and just rule had returned there.

The result was threatening to Israel, as a large number of the very best citizens crossed the line into Judah. Baasha's envious eyes saw grave danger in this, and it gave him a fine excuse to attack the small-

er neighbor. He proceeded with a deep-laid scheme.

On a high point six miles north of Jerusalem, Baasha built a strong fort. From this elevation he could control Jerusalem, as it commanded all roads from the north as well as the east, and it was only a question of time, until the city would be his.

Napoleon, himself, could not have planned it better. But Israel had to reckon with a stronger force than Judah alone. When Asa, king of Judah, saw this large fortress rising so close to Jerusalem, he asked the Syrian king, Ben-hadad, to turn his forces on the cities of northern Israel.

Ben-hadad quickly brought together a large army which he rushed down to the border of Israel. Baasha was startled by this unexpected attack. The fortress, in which he had taken such keen satisfaction, was left to its own fate, and his whole army pushed on to northern Israel.

Asa then not only seized his ambitious fort, but called on all the men of Judah to tear it down. The stones and timber were then carried farther north, where the material was put into two new fortresses, Geba and Mizpah. It was a greater humiliation to know that these two strongholds not only would be a protection to Judah, but even a menace to Israel.

Baasha's power was broken. He had made for himself active foes both in the south and the north. A year later he died in his capital, Tirzah, a disappointed and uneasy king.

The story of his life resembles that of Jeroboam. Both were of humble birth, both usurpers, both skillful generals, and both closed a long reign with an un-

successful attack on Judah. Baasha had ruled over Israel twenty-four years.

* * *

Gibbethon was besieged by the army of Israel. This time, the king, Elah, the weak son of Baasha, remained at home in his capital, Tirzah.

A second time the army was overwhelmed with the news of the king's death, but there was no one in sympathy with the murderer.

The army had nothing to do with the crime, and great indignation was felt toward Zimri, one of the court officers, who had taken the life of the king while they were banqueting, and the king had been "drinking himself drunk."

Zimri took possession of the capital city and held it just seven days. He is known as the king of a week's reign.

But in that short time, he made use of his kingly authority in a vigorous way. He left not one male child of the family of Baasha alive, "neither of his kinsfolk nor of his friends." The prophet's prediction to the unbelieving Baasha came to pass.

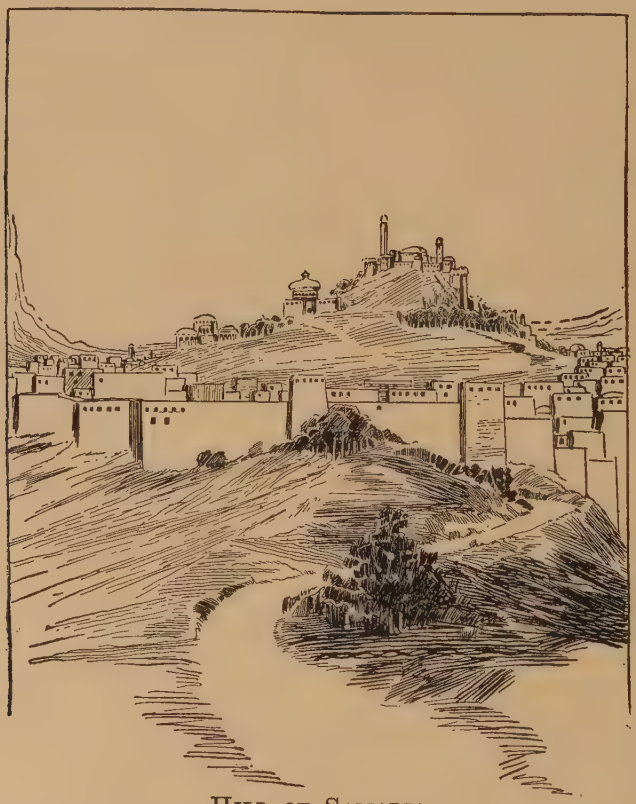
But vengeance was fast approaching. Gibbethon was abandoned, the siege was raised, and Omri took his army back and captured Tirzah. When Zimri saw how hopeless his cause was, he adopted the pagan plan of getting out of trouble by committing suicide.

We can readily see why Omri was captain of the host, and afterwards elected king. He was a man of unusual force and ability. His twelve years' reign is one of the striking ones of Israel.

There was constant trouble with Ben-hadad of

Syria. That monarch was very unwilling to give up the foothold he had secured, when he came across the line to help Judah against Baasha.

For a time, Omri and Ben-hadad gave each other blow for blow. Where one would advance, the other



Hill of Samaria.

disputed his right, but on the whole, Israel suffered most. Cities were wrested from Omri, but the most humiliating result was that in the capital, Samaria. Ben-hadad was granted the use of streets, and Syrian

quarters were established for that country's trade. It must have been a severe blow to the pride of Samaria.

There is a famous stone called the "Moabite Stone," discovered not very long ago, and now standing in the Louvre at Paris. Its inscriptions give the important events in the land of Moab.

The first king of Israel mentioned is Omri. It appears that he brought Moab under his power, and imposed a very heavy tribute. Every year the king of Moab sent to the king of Israel one hundred thousand lambs and one hundred thousand rams. The Bible confirms this statement, but does not make it clear under which king this practice was begun.

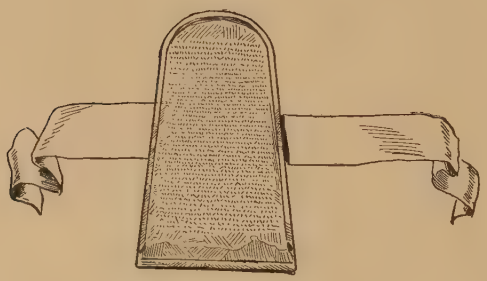
The chief glory of Omri is that he was the founder of Samaria, the beautiful capital of Israel. With an eye to greater beauty and far greater security, and perhaps to vie with Jerusalem, Omri purchased a high hill towering above all the surrounding country, and began the building of his splendid capital.

This commanding position was surrounded by deep fertile valleys, and these, in turn, were encircled by high protecting hills and mountains. After the heavy walls and high fortresses had been built around this city, which he called Samaria, "a watch-tower," it was such a stronghold as could hardly be captured.

If Omri established this new capital in order to have his name more closely associated with the kingdom, he was not disappointed in his ambitions. The beautiful city in this ideal location remained the capital to the end, and "the house of Omri" among surrounding nations, was only another name for Samaria, and the kingdom of Israel.

QUESTIONS

Why did Baasha slay the king?
Did he bring in religious reforms?
How did Baasha make trouble for Judah?
How was he stopped in his unfriendly work?
What king reigned one week?
Who was Omri?
What was the character of this king?
What is the Moabite Stone?
What lasting work did Omri do?



CHAPTER XXXI

KING AHAB AND HIS WICKED QUEEN

OF ALL the nineteen kings of Israel, Ahab, the son of Omri, lived a life the most stirring and eventful. He, and his notorious queen, Jezebel, stand out in the nation's history above all other kings and queens, as doers of evil. But we cannot say that Ahab, himself, was worse than several others, and he was a shrewd and able ruler.

His introduction to us is as a bridegroom when he, the king of Israel, was taking for his queen the daughter of Ethbaal, king of Phoenicia. It is possible that the marriage had been arranged by his father Omri, but even thus, we feel sure that the young prince of Israel was very willing to wed this bold, dashing and masterful daughter of idolatry. His whole attitude towards her as queen tells us as much.

Both Ahab and his father could have given good reasons why such a marriage was for the welfare of the kingdom. Israel was already in the power of Ben-hadad, king of Syria, and without some strong ally, the future was uncertain.

To be connected with a country like Phoenicia would be a great advantage. Its capital Tyre, where Jezebel had lived, was a wide-awake city, and very

much in advance of Samaria in worldly culture and comforts. When simple, pastoral Israel should come in touch with a city of such large trade interests, new ideas and ambitions would rise in the people, and progress would be the result.

It all came to pass. Queen Jezebel appeared in Samaria as a lady of fashion with a large following, showing the splendors of a Phoenician court. The market-place had never before displayed such costly merchandise, exquisite wearing-apparel, and rich tapestries and hangings for house-furnishings, and a time of luxury followed. We know this from the character of Tyre, and especially from the queen herself, to the last scene of her life.

This strong-minded woman at once got the more yielding Ahab under her influence. To please her, he built a house for Baal in the capital, and erected an altar for his worship. The Phoenician goddess, Ashtoreth, was equally honored. No expense was spared to make their worship attractive and imposing. At the queen's table sat four hundred and fifty priests of Baal and four hundred of Ashtoreth. When all these priests were engaged in their idol-worship, twisting their bodies in a fantastic way, while their weird chanting and wild shrieking filled the air, the whole must have been spectacular. It is easy to understand the indignation and horror of the few simple, devout Israelites when they looked on such frenzy.

The indulgent king tolerated all this for his queen's sake, and he may have taken to the idea that if one God was a security, many gods would be a stronger protection. But he soon learned his mistake.

Ben-hadad, who had defeated King Omri, was strong and insolent. His nation had grown to size and strength, while Israel had remained a small world-power. Made bold by this unequal strength, Ben-hadad picked a quarrel with Ahab and then ordered his army to set themselves in array.

The outlook was dark to Ahab and his small army. What chance had he against such a host! Just when he most needed encouragement, a prophet appeared before him.

"Thus saith Jehovah. Hast thou seen all this great multitude? Behold I will deliver it into thy hand this day; and thou shalt know that I am Jehovah," he said.

"By whom?" questioned Ahab.

"By the young men of the princes of the provinces," answered the prophet.

Ahab was all attention, and it was with eager interest that he asked, "Who shall begin the battle?"

When the answer came, "Thou," he at once began preparations. Following the prophet's command, he first mustered the two hundred and thirty-two young men, and sent them out, so as to reach the Syrian camp by noon.

Ahab well knew that in the heat of the day, the dissipated Syrian king would be drinking with his kings, and in the worst possible state for battle.

Word came in to the drunken king, and his royal company, that a little band of men had come from Samaria. A shout of derision must have gone up from the pavilions at the appearance of such a handful to face the warring hosts of Syria.

"Take them alive whether in peace or war," commanded the intoxicated monarch.

Perhaps, to his confused mind, this appeared like a royal joke, but the result he found to be serious. It seems probable that the whole army was in a drunken state. The few young Hebrews valiantly slew them right and left, and the Syrian army became confused and were put to rout.

The body of the army of Israel came up, and though it numbered only seven thousand men, the Syrian disaster was complete. Ben-hadad himself, by this time quite sober, escaped on horseback, a very humble king.

This was truly a splendid victory for Ahab and his small army, but he was not allowed to rest on his laurels. The same prophet came again and said impressively, "Go strengthen thyself, and mark, and see what thou doest, for at the return of the year the king of Syria will come up against thee."

On the other hand, Ben-hadad's subjects ventured to approach him with comfort and counsel. His army was defeated because the battle was fought in the hills where the God of Israel dwells, they said, while the Syrian god is of the plains. But with an army of equal strength, a battle fought on the plains would give Syria the victory. Then the wise men of war advised that the weak kings be removed from the army, and real captains be made generals.

The next year saw Ahab again facing the Syrian host, and the same difference in the size of the armies was evident. This time the battle-field was the great historic plain of Aphek, where both Gideon and Saul

had fought memorable battles. The Bible gives a vivid picture of the armies of Israel and Syria: "And the children of Israel encamped before them like two little flocks of kids, but the Syrians filled the country."

Ahab must have trembled before this immense multitude of Syria. At the right time the prophet again came, and assured him that this great army was to be overthrown, and he and his "two little flocks" would be victorious.

For a whole week the armies encamped near together before the battle began. They seemed to be watching each other, and fearing to make an attack. After the terrible engagement was over, one hundred thousand Syrians lay dead on the plain. The rest fled to the city of Aphek when a fresh disaster met them. A wall, perhaps a hastily made fortification, gave way, and crushed twenty-seven thousand Syrians.

Ben-hadad could not have been in a worse position. With the blind impulse to hide from the enemy, he fled from chamber to chamber in the city, till he came into an inner chamber, where he was as good as imprisoned, and at the mercy of Ahab.

In this desperate strait, the Syrian king acted on an unusual plan suggested by his officers. They advised him to appeal to the mercy of the king of Israel. Accordingly, those servants with sackcloth on their loins, and ropes on their heads, in token of distress and humiliation, came before Ahab, and meekly said to the king, "Thy servant Ben-hadad saith, I pray thee, let me live."

Circumstances had changed since Ben-hadad sent his threatening messages to the vassal king of Israel.

It was now in Ahab's power to return this insolence, but instead, this easily-moved king gave the surprising return, "Is he yet alive? he is my brother."

The astonished officers, to make sure that they had heard right, and to follow up any possible advantage, ventured to add, "Thy brother, Ben-hadad."

"Go ye, bring him," the king commanded.

It must have been a very distressed and uncertain Ben-hadad who approached Ahab. What could be his intention? Would he have him killed outright?

But Ahab greeted him as a brother-king, and took him up in his chariot. The wily Syrian at once began to make great promises.

"The cities, which my father took from thy father, I will restore, and thou shalt make streets for thee in Damascus, as my father made in Samaria."

Ahab was in good spirits. He forgot entirely that it was the Lord who had given him this victory over a great heathen power. He took it upon himself to treat with this enemy as he liked. It was not in God's plan that Ahab should accept the treacherous Syrian foe as a brother, and make a loose treaty with him. When the enemy was again out of reach, he could keep or break it.

King Ahab was on his triumphal return to Samaria, when a prophet disguised with his head-band over his eyes, called to him from the wayside. It is possible that he had seen the sudden friendship, and his prophetic soul beheld trouble to come of it. To the king, flushed with victory, he revealed how this weak treaty with a false enemy would bring destruction on both Israel and her king. Ahab continued on his way,

but the glow of triumph had left him. He entered Samaria "heavy and displeased."

But Ahab's last undertaking was at hand, and the end was nearly in sight. For his really good qualities, he had been given a long trial. He was genial and generous, and without doubt, had lovable traits. The great pity was that he was so easily influenced, and that his directing spirit was the fanatical queen.

The marriage of Ahab's daughter, Athaliah, to Jehoshaphat's son, Jehoram, was undoubtedly to strengthen their kingdoms, and later, Jehoshaphat made Ahab a friendly visit.

We can easily imagine that Ahab and Jezebel were splendid entertainers. The Bible account that "Ahab killed sheep and oxen for him in abundance and for the people that were with him," tells us that he set before his guests a royal banquet.

Just at the right moment, when the royal company felt pleased with themselves and all the world, Ahab brought up the subject of their common enemy, Syria. He showed Jehoshaphat how Ben-hadad had broken the loose treaty after the second Syrian war, by refusing to give up the stronghold, Ramoth-Gilead. Then he unfolded his plan of capturing the city, and asked for his friend's assistance.

The king of Judah was a guest, and his courtly host was of the same race and people. His polite reply, "I am as thou art, my people as thy people, my horses as thy horses," sounds very much like a promise. If so, he recalled it at once, by asking that first the will of the Lord be learned regarding the undertaking.

A memorable scene followed. The two kings arrayed in royal robes were sitting each on his throne, in an open place near the gate of Samaria. Before them stood four hundred prophets summoned by Ahab.

Micaiah Before Ahab and Jehoshaphat.

"Shall I go against Ramoth-Gilead to battle, or shall I forbear?" the king asked them.

"Go up, for the Lord will deliver it into the hand of the king," was the glib reply of those time-servers.

Ahab was delighted, but his guest was not entirely satisfied with the appearance of these men. "Is there not a prophet of Jehovah besides?" he asked.

Ahab reluctantly called in one he hated, Micaiah, because he was not afraid to tell the king the unpleasant truth. When this fearless prophet was asked the same question, he would promise nothing but defeat.

King Ahab in a great rage sent him to prison, and began at once his preparations for war. As for Jehoshaphat, his word had been given, and he could not well withdraw with one voice against four hundred.

In the fatal attack against Ramoth-Gilead, Jehoshaphat had a narrow escape, and Ahab was struck by a chance arrow. The battle raged furiously, and all day long the mortally wounded king sat propped up in his chariot, bravely encouraging his soldiers. About sunset Ahab died, and at the same hour, a cry went up throughout all the hosts of Israel, "Every man to his city, and every man to his country."

The king's body was brought to Samaria, and the grewsome prophecy of Elijah was verified. The chariot, in which the wounded king had sat all day, was washed in the pool of Samaria, and the dogs licked up his blood.

QUESTIONS

What was Ahab's first mistake?

Who was Queen Jezebel, and what was her character?

Compare Ahab's idolatry with Jeroboam's.

What great prophet tried to befriend Israel?

In what way do we see something good in Ahab?

CHAPTER XXXII

THE PROPHET OF THE WILDERNESS

LIJAH, the grandest and most impressive of the prophets in his life and actions, came to Israel when he was most needed. The whole nation was living in sin and idolatry, and Samaria lay under the seductive spell of Jezebel.

Elijah seems to have been something of a mystery. Nothing is known of his birth, family, or early history. He was called "a sojourner of Gilead," and he lived among the hills beyond the Jordan.

He was anything but a man of courtly ways. He wore his hair long, he dressed in black camel's hair, with a leather girdle, and lived in the simplest way. He approached the corrupt court of Jezebel only when he had a message for the king. His errand accomplished, he quickly turned his back on the city, and dropped out of sight in lonely places. To his soul, full of high ideas of worship, the wild frenzy and degrading practices of Baal and Ashtoreth worship were unbearable.

Our first view of him was not, evidently, his first appearance in Samaria. He stood before King Ahab and fearlessly delivered his message, "As Jehovah the God of Israel lives, before whom I stand, there shall

ELIJAH REBUKING AHAB

not be dew nor rain these years, but at the utterance of my word."

He did not remain to see the effect of his words. Perhaps Ahab laughed good naturedly, but as soon as Jezebel had recovered from her first surprise, it would not have been well for Elijah to have been within her reach. The time had come when she was taking steps toward putting an end to Jehovah worship, and God had warned Elijah to withdraw.

Jezebel stirred up the king's anger against the prophet. A close search for him was made, and her fury knew no bounds. As they could not locate Elijah to punish him, she had other prophets of God seized and put to death.

One of the king's officers saved many of these by hiding them in mountain caves. He kept about fifty in each cave, and we can imagine with what difficulty he smuggled food to so many.

The third year came, but no relief was in sight. The land was full of suffering, and the king longed for the prophet. They had searched for him far and near, but all in vain, and perhaps they concluded that he must have died of famine in the wilderness, or been torn to pieces by some hungry beast.

For a time, Elijah lived in a lonely spot near the brook Cherith. There he was fed by the ravens in some wonderful way. When the drouth continued, and this brook became dry, he had to make a change.

He was commanded by God to go to the other side of Judah, to a place called Sarepta, in the kingdom of Eth-baal, the father of Queen Jezebel. It certainly looks like the irony of fate, that the person whom

Jezebel spared no efforts to find, that she might lay violent hands on him, should be living safe and sound, in her father's dominions.

The three years' famine was drawing to a close, and the desolateness of the land was complete. Now, if ever, the king and people would be ready to listen to the word of God, and Elijah was directed to show himself to the king.

The want had become so great that even the king, and the governor of his household, were out to see if, by chance, they could find, near fountains and brooks, enough grass to save the horses and mules. To make the search thorough, and as wide as possible, the two had separated and taken different courses.

Elijah was on his way to Samaria to see the king, when he came face to face with this governor, Obadiah. The royal servant recognized the great prophet at once, and fell on his face in awe.

"Art thou my lord Elijah?" he exclaimed.

The prophet assured him that he was, and asked him to go and tell King Ahab.

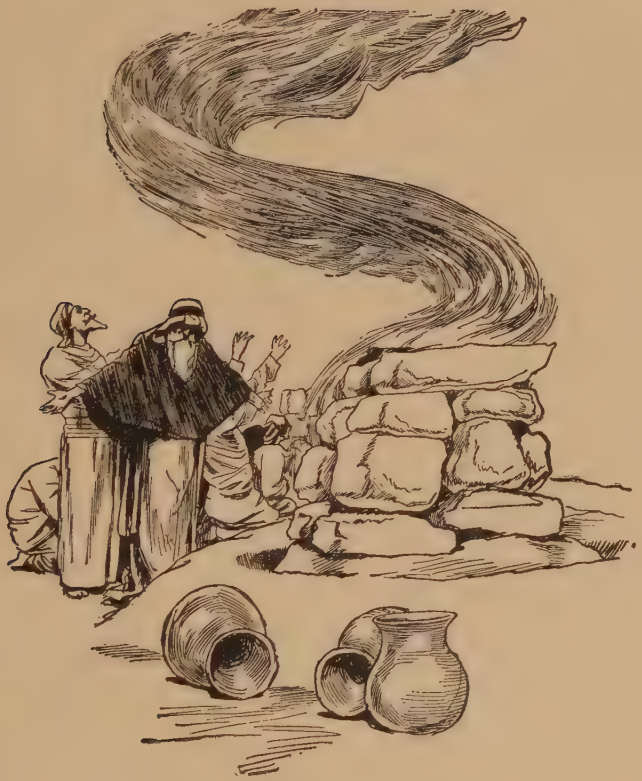
The devout servant was terror-stricken. He knew how every corner of the kingdom had been searched for the prophet. Now if he should report to the king that the person he most wanted had been found, and when the king came in great haste to secure him, he should not find any trace of him, Ahab would make Obadiah suffer for the disappointment.

Elijah gave his promise that he would not vanish, and the king was informed.

Ahab could hardly believe his ears. Was he then to find the man who had brought such suffering to

the nation? At sight of the prophet, he forgot everything but his indignation and anger.

"Art thou that troubler of Israel?" was his bold greeting.



ELIJAH BEFORE THE ALTAR.

Elijah fearlessly threw back the blame where it belonged.

"I have not troubled Israel, but thou and thy father's house," was his reply.

Ahab had nothing to say. In Elijah's presence, he

always seemed to feel the majesty and authority of the prophet. The king had his good qualities.

"Send, and gather to me all Israel to Mount Carmel, and the prophets of Baal four hundred and fifty, and the prophets of Ashtoreth four hundred, that eat at Jezebel's table," commanded Elijah.

Ahab was so impressed that he obeyed him at once. The famine had humbled the king.

The scene which followed is the most noteworthy of Elijah's ministry. On Mount Carmel, the high promontory which seemed to be "dipping his feet in the western sea," stood the congregation of Israel, as many as could be hastily brought together, and the eight hundred and fifty priests of idolatry, and the king himself.

Elijah rebuked the king and people for their weak and wavering religious zeal.

"How long go ye limping between the two sides?" he exclaimed. "If Jehovah be God, follow him, but if Baal, then follow him."

The subdued people said not a word, and we can imagine that the large company of heathen priests looked on in silent contempt to see what this mad prophet would do next.

Elijah raised his hand, and looking at the king, proposed the severest test of the divinity of gods in the history of religion.

"I, even I only, am left a prophet of Jehovah; but Baal's prophets are four hundred and fifty men."

Then he suggested that those priests take one bullock, and prepare it to sacrifice on one altar, and he do the same with another bullock on another altar. The

wood was to be laid on the altar, but no fire kindled under it. Instead, they were to pray to their gods and he to Jehovah, "and the God that answered by fire, let him be God."

The people answered, "It is well-spoken," the king gave the command, and the Baal priests could not withdraw.

The priests opened the ceremony. They laid their sacrifice on the altar without fire, and called on the name of Baal from early morning until the noon-hour. As no voice answered them, they leaped about the altar in frenzy.

Elijah stood aside, and watched their frantic efforts. "Cry aloud," he said in a mocking tone, "for he is a god; either he is moving, or he is gone aside, or he is on a journey, or peradventure he is sleeping and must be awakened."

In greater desperation, they kept up their appeals, cutting themselves with knives and lances, as was their custom in worship, "till the blood gushed out upon them." But the evening came without results.

Perhaps it was the next morning when Elijah's part came. In the face of the failure of the priests, he began his work with confidence. In the presence of all the people he built up the altar of God, of twelve stones. Around this altar he made a good-sized trench. He put the wood in order, and laid the sacrifice on the wood. Then he ordered water to be poured on the offering and wood, till the water ran around the altar and filled the trench. This was done that no Baal priest could accuse him of having fire secreted in the altar.

When all was ready, Elijah prayed to his God, "Hear me, O Jehovah, hear me, that this people may know thou art God."

The answer came as swift as lightning from the sky. "The fire of Jehovah fell and consumed the burnt-offering, and the wood, and the stones, and the dust, and licked up the water that was in the trench."

The people were amazed and awed. They fell on their faces and cried, "Jehovah he is God! Jehovah he is God!"

The priests of Baal were dumb, and the king looked on quietly, while Elijah had the ministers of the lowest kind of idolatry put to death. Human life was held very cheap in those days, before Christ came to show the world that all men are brothers.

Elijah turned to Ahab, and said, "Get thee up, eat and drink, for there is the sound of abundance of rain."

While the king was joyously eating and drinking, Elijah went higher up on the mount, and bowed himself on the earth, with his face between his knees.

His servant had been sent to look towards the sea for the coming rain. He returned, saying that he saw nothing to give promise of rain. The prophet sent him again and again, and the seventh time he was able to report that a cloud was rising out of the sea as big as a man's hand.

"Make ready thy chariot, and get thee down, that the rain stop thee not," was the word Elijah sent to Ahab, who by this time was higher up on the mount.

In a little while, "the heavens grew black with

clouds and wind, and there was a great rain." The king hastened on his way, but when he reached the gate of Jezreel, he found that Elijah had outstripped him and was there waiting.

If Jezebel had been away, she had returned by the time Ahab reached the summer home. As usual she was soon in possession of the whole story of how her priests had been humiliated and put to death, and of how Elijah's God had been proclaimed the only God.

Jezebel was more than angry. The much-needed rain was as nothing in her eyes compared with the death of her priests.

She sent a dark threat to the prophet, "So let the gods do to me, and more also, if I make not thy life as the life of one of them by tomorrow about this time."

Elijah knew by this that Ahab had gone back under her influence, and he became disheartened. "He arose, and went for his life" into the wilderness.

The next picture we have of him is where he was sitting alone under a "solitary wilderness-bush." The three years of drouth, his prayers and strenuous work on Mount Carmel, all seemed in vain. Israel would go back to Baal-worship under the strong influence of Jezebel.

Elijah preferred to live away from the city. He shrank from public life, and ran away from it as often as he dared. But when God's spirit told him that his duty was to serve his fellowmen, he returned obediently to the court which he disliked to see.

After he had anointed Elisha to succeed him, Elijah was sent to rebuke Ahab in the vineyard of Na-

both, after Jezebel's fearful crime. This was his last meeting with the king as far as we know, and it made a deep impression on Ahab.

Israel sank lower and lower in idolatry. The outlook was dark, but the turning point was not far away. Elijah's work for Israel was not in vain.

We have one more view of Elijah. Ahab died in battle and his son Ahaziah succeeded him. He was weak and superstitious, and we do not doubt that Jezebel had more complete sway than ever.

Ahaziah met with an accident. He had not been king very long, when by some chance he fell through a lattice in his upper chamber and was severely injured.

We are not surprised that the son of Jezebel did not consult the hated prophet, Elijah, in his distress. No doubt Jezebel was at his bedside, and sent the messengers to inquire of the god of Ekron what would be his fate.

The prophet Elijah, purposely, met these men on their way, and made known to them that it was not necessary for them to go farther.

"The king shall not come down from his bed, but he shall surely die," was the message he sent to the king.

This was a depressing report they had to give the king. When they added a description of the person they had met, as a hairy man with a girdle of leather around his loins, the king at once knew him.

"It is Elijah the Tishbite!" he exclaimed with scorn.

The king was very angry. Why had this old prophet, whom he had been taught by his mother to hate,

interfered with his messengers? At once he sent a captain with fifty men to bring him into his presence.

Elijah was sitting on the top of a high hill when the threatening company arrived.

At a word from the prophet, all these men were destroyed.

Again the king sent up a captain with his fifty men. These, too, were destroyed.

A third company was sent out by the desperate king but this time the captain came up humbly and fell on his knees before Elijah, and prayed that their lives might be spared.

The prophet had mercy on them, and went down to see the king. When he stood in the presence of Ahaziah, he told him the plain truth. In this weak son of Ahab and the wicked Jezebel he saw the evils which had come to Israel. "Thou shalt surely die," he said to the sick king.

Elijah's public work was done. The future of the Hebrew race was better for his severe work. After this he only waited for his translation.

QUESTIONS

How would you describe Elijah?

With what king of Israel was he associated?

What was his first message to this king?

Where was Elijah during the three years' famine?

Why did King Ahab want the prophet?

How did Elijah convince the king and people that Jehovah is God?

Tell what happened on Mount Carmel.

What became of the priests of Baal?

CHAPTER XXXIII

THE PROPHET OF THE COURT

USY days had come to the farmers of Israel. It was the plowing season, and in one very broad fertile field were twelve yoke of oxen at work. They plodded on steadily under the goad of their drivers, and at every round, twelve fresh furrows were added to the plowed field.

The owner of this field was a wealthy man named Shaphat, and the young man walking behind the last yoke of oxen, was his son, Elisha. The other plowmen appeared more like servants.

Down a neighboring hill came a man of striking appearance. His hair hung about his shoulders, and his dress was a long robe of black camel's hair. Sandals on his feet and a leather belt around the waist completed his dress.

Elisha undoubtedly knew him well, and probably stopped his oxen that he might show him due respect. It was Elijah, the prophet of Israel, who must have been a welcome guest whenever he would honor the home of Elisha's father with his presence.

Elijah drew near and as he was passing, without a word, threw his mantle on Elisha. The young man was surprised, but he knew the meaning of the act.

It was an invitation to follow Elijah more as a pupil than a servant.

As soon as he had recovered from his surprise, he left his oxen and ran after the prophet.

"Let me, I pray thee, kiss my father and my mother, and then I will follow thee," he said.

Before he left his home and kindred, he made a farewell feast for his father's household. At the same time he showed them that he did not intend to return to his farming. He killed the oxen, and with the broken wooden yoke for fuel, he cooked the flesh and gave it to the people. This was truly what we call "burning the bridges behind him."

Of the years when he was serving Elijah, we know very little. After the great prophet's death when Elisha came forth into public life as the leading prophet, we find that he differed much from his teacher.

He came not so much to rebuke as to befriend. His first act of helpfulness shows the character of the man and his mission.

The city of Jericho was very pleasantly located, but the one great drawback to its being a good place to live in was the bitter water-springs. The people appealed to Elisha, and in some mysterious way he "healed" the one principal fountain. It is said that at the present time, there is one strong spring of sweet water in this place, while all around it are several with brackish water.

Elisha was soon called into the council of kings, and his life-work was under way.

Jehoram, the king of Israel, was planning an at-

tack on the Moabites. Their offense was that, after the death of Ahab, they became so independent in spirit that they refused to pay the old tribute of one hundred thousand lambs and one hundred thousand rams. To make sure of success, the king had asked the help of Jehoshaphat of Judah, and the king of Edom.

These three kings with their large armies were on their way to Moab. They had been marching seven days through the desert of Edom where there was no water to be found, and men and beasts were suffering.

The king of Israel was in despair, and felt himself already in the hands of his enemies. But the good Jehoshaphat, with a larger faith, asked for a prophet of God.

When one of the king's officers said that Elisha, "who had poured water on the hands of Elijah," was with the army, Jehoshaphat was comforted.

"The word of Jehovah is with him," he said with fervor, and the three kings went down to see the prophet.

Perhaps Jehoram felt proud that this noted prophet belonged to his nation, but if so, he was soon humbled.

When the kings drew near the prophet, he looked with contempt on the king of Israel. "Were it not that I regard the presence of Jehoshaphat, the king of Judah, I would not look toward thee nor regard thee," he said to his own king.

This rebuke must have been hard to bear in the presence of his brother-kings, but the need was great, and he waited humbly for the prophet's help.

"Make this valley full of trenches," the prophet instructed them. "Ye shall not see wind, neither shall ye see rain; yet that valley shall be filled with water, and ye shall drink both ye, and your cattle, and your beasts."

That night, a sudden storm in the mountains farther up sent a large body of water down the dry channel, and the trenches were filled.

On the east side were encamped the Moabites. In the morning when the rising sun shone on the water colored by the red soil, they thought it was dyed with blood. They concluded that the armies had fallen out among themselves, and that a general massacre had taken place.

"Now, Moab, to the spoil," was the cry, as they rushed to the tents of the enemy.

This was a scheme which the allies had not thought of beforehand, but they were not slow in taking advantage of the situation.

When the Moabites reached the camp, the Israelites and those who assisted, fell upon them, slaying them right and left. The Moabites turned, and went with all speed from the camp, which they had set out to plunder.

The Israelites followed them. They swept on, destroying cities, covering fertile fields with stones, stopping up the fountains, and cutting down the trees.

A remnant of the splendid Moabite army was at last shut up in a strong city, and the armies of Israel laid siege to this place. The king of Moab made a desperate effort to break through the forces and

escape, but he failed. Then he made a sacrifice which filled all beholders with horror.

This king worshiped a god to whom were offered human sacrifices. When the people were in great need, they would sacrifice the one that was dearest. This king took his oldest son who was expected to reign in his place, and on the city wall in sight of all armies, offered him to his god Chemosh. The horrible sight sickened the three kings and their armies. The siege was raised, and the kings went to their own kingdoms.

Elisha came in close touch with several kings. At one time his growing fame came very near plunging two nations into misunderstanding and war.

Naaman, who stood very high as captain of the Syrian host, was a leper. In the captain's household was a little maid of Israel whose duty it was to wait on Naaman's wife.

This little girl seeing her master's affliction, was reminded of Elisha and the good works he did in Israel.

"Would that my master were with the prophet that is in Samaria," she said to her mistress. "Then he would recover him of his leprosy."

This was reported to Naaman probably by a messenger from his wife.

When the king heard about the wonderful works of the prophet, he commanded his favorite captain to hasten to Israel at once.

Naaman presented himself at the court of Israel with magnificent presents and a letter from the Syrian king. "I have sent Naaman, my servant, to

thee that thou mayest recover him of his leprosy," the letter read.

The king of Israel rent his clothes in despair. "Am I God to kill and make alive?" he exclaimed. "See how he seeketh a quarrel against me."

NAAMAN OFFERS PRESENTS TO ELISHA.

Elisha heard of the king's trouble. "Let him come to me, and he shall know that there is a prophet in Israel," he said to the king.

Word was speedily sent to Naaman. The leper came with his splendid following, and stood before

the little house of the prophet. Everyone expected that Elisha would show great honors to this distinguished man from a foreign court.

But he did not as much as go out to meet him. Instead, he sent out a messenger, saying, "Go and wash in the Jordan seven times, and thy flesh shall come to thee again, and thou shalt be clean."

What a humiliating reception, and the instructions for the cure were an insult to anyone from Syria. Naaman was angry, and turned to leave Samaria.

One of his servants who saw his folly, drew near him and said, "My father, if the prophet had laid upon thee some great thing, wouldst thou not have done it? How much rather then, when he said to thee, Wash and be clean?"

Naaman was wise enough to take the counsel of his servant. He went down and dipped himself seven times in the Jordan. His flesh became as the flesh of a little child, and he was clean. He went back to Syria declaring, "Now I know that there is no God in all the earth but in Israel."

After the healing of Naaman, the leper, one would think that Syria and Israel would have been very close friends, but any good feeling which sprang up was soon gone. The first thing we are told is, that the king of Syria warred against Israel.

The king of Syria was mystified. No matter how secretly he laid his plans against the king of Israel, he always found that monarch ready to meet him. He began to suspect some of his own officers guilty of treachery.

"Nay, my lord, O king," answered one of his men.

"But Elisha, the prophet that is in Israel, telleth the king of Israel the words that thou speakest in thy bedchamber."

"He must be captured at once," the king said. The prophet was located at Dothan, and a host of men came to seize him.

In the morning when Elisha's early-rising servant saw how an army surrounded the city, he was much alarmed. The prophet's assurance to him, is one of the most frequently quoted passages in the Bible:

"Fear not, for they that are with us are more than they that are with them."

A most wonderful vision came to the youth. "The mountain was full of horses and chariots of fire round about Elisha."

The Syrian army was stricken with blindness, which means, probably, that the officers became so confused that they knew not where they were. Elisha took the lead, and brought the army to Samaria, and right into the power of the Israelites.

He then instructed Jehoram, king of Israel, to set bread and water before them "that they may eat and drink, and go to their master."

The Syrian army went home, and their people were so humbled that for a time "the bands of Syria came no more into the land of Israel." Elisha had saved Israel from another great war.

But all lessons were forgotten. Again Syria laid siege to Samaria, and reduced the city to starvation. One morning, when King Jehoram was passing along on the wall of the city, he heard a story of hunger and distress which made him sick at heart. His own peo-

ple were becoming cannibals. He rent his clothes in anguish, and as he did so, the people could see that he wore sackcloth next to his flesh.

Elisha was the king's counselor, and as was common, when anything went wrong, the prophet was held responsible. The king made a fierce vow.

"God do so and more also to me, if the head of Elisha, the son of Shaphat, stand on him this day."

Elisha was sitting quietly in his home with his elders, when a messenger was sent by the king to put an end to the prophet. It was to be a perfect surprise, but before the officer arrived, Elisha said to his companions, "See ye how this son of a murderer hath sent to take away my head?"

Then he instructed them to shut the door, "for is not the sound of his master's feet behind him?" he added.

The officer came, followed close by King Jehoram. Elisha quieted the excited king by promising food for the starving people.

"Tomorrow about this time shall a measure of fine flour be sold for a shekel, and two measures of barley for a shekel in the gate of Samaria." The scarcity had been so great, that the head of an ass had sold for eighty shekels.

The Syrian army, encamped outside the city walls, became panic-stricken in the twilight. The soldiers heard a noise of chariots and of horses, and they jumped to the conclusion that the king of Israel had hired the Hittites and Egyptians to attack them. In great fear, they fled, leaving their tents and everything in the camp.

Four lepers outside of the city walls were the first to learn of the flight. They were poor and starving, and naturally their first thought was to eat their fill, and hide some of the wealth which they found in the deserted camp. Then they made known the glad news to the starving people in the city.

The word came in the night. The king arose and the whole city was astir.

"I will show you what the Syrians have done to us," he said, in doubt. "They know that we are hungry, therefore are they gone out of the camp to hide themselves in the field."

Spies were sent out in all directions to find the hidden enemy, but the report they brought back was comforting. The way to the Jordan was full of garments and vessels which the Syrians had cast away.

When this became known, a mad crowd of famished people rushed into the Syrian camp. Food was abundant and cheap in Samaria that day.

After awhile, King Jehoram began to backslide into idolatry, and a coolness sprang up between him and Elisha. The son of Jezebel showed more and more of his early training as he grew older, and it seemed that the royal family of Ahab must be removed for the good of Israel.

The king undertook wars without consulting the prophet. In a severe battle he was wounded, and went to Jezreel to be healed, leaving his army in charge of his general, Jehu.

Elisha sent a young prophet to anoint Jehu to be king. Jehoram's death followed, and then came Jehu's terrible reign.

The last view we have of Elisha is on his death bed. King Joash, a grandson of Jehu, who was on the throne of Israel, had come to visit the prophet.

When he entered the room where the dying prophet lay, he was full of sorrow. He wept over him, and cried, "My father, my father, the chariots of Israel and the horsemen thereof."

The great prophet and firm friend of Israel had spent a long life in the service of his God and his nation.

QUESTIONS

What is our first view of Elisha?

What do you think was his character as a young man?

How did he differ from Elijah?

How did the case of Naaman bring him into touch with Syria?

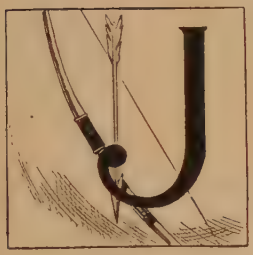
Why did the king of Syria plan to capture Elisha?

What promise did Elisha give to his frightened servant?

How did Jehoram show his early training in the home of his mother Jezebel?

CHAPTER XXXIV

THE SCOURGE OF ISRAEL



JEHU, the general of the king's army at Ramoth-Gilead, was sitting quietly with his captains, when a stranger rushed into their presence and asked to see him in private.

The general led the way into an inner chamber. No doubt he had weapons in hand in case this wild-looking man should attack him.

But as soon as they were out of sight and sound of the others, the stranger brought out a bottle of oil which he poured on the head of the astonished Jehu, telling him that he had been sent by Elisha, the prophet, to anoint him king of Israel. Then he hurried away as if he wanted to escape being questioned.

Jehu went back to his officers trying to appear as if nothing had happened. "Is all well? Wherefore came this mad fellow to thee?" they asked.

Jehu knew how little his life would be worth if this act should be reported to the king, and he tried to turn them aside with a vague answer.

They were more curious than ever. "Tell us now," they insisted.

Finally he told briefly what had happened, and waited in suspense for the result.

The captains were delighted. They rose as one man, blew their trumpets, and cried with a loud voice, "Jehu is king!"

It is evident that this was no new thought to them. Perhaps they had been plotting something of the kind

WATCHMEN SEE JEHU DRIVING FURIOUSLY.

while Jehu was in with the messenger, and it may even have been hinted to him before that.

Jehu was pleased with their hearty response. He would act at once.

King Jehoram had been wounded in the recent battle at Ramoth-Gilead, and he had left his army in

charge of Jehu, while he went to Jezreel to be healed. If he should learn of this bold uprising, he would get ready at once to put it down.

Jehu got up into his chariot and with quite a company, started out to Jezreel. The watchman who stood on the tower of Jezreel to see that no danger approached the king's city, saw in the distance Jehu and his company. When the king was told, he directed that a horseman be sent to meet them to see who they were, and to ask them if they came in peace.

The watchman, whose eyes had followed the horseman, reported to the king that his messenger had disappeared in the rear of the chariots.

"Send out another," commanded the king.

Again the watchman sent down word to the king that this horseman had fallen in behind the chariots, as the first had done, but this time he added that the driving of the leader "is like the driving of Jehu, for he driveth furiously."

The king was startled. If it was the general, something must be wrong with the army at Ramoth-Gilead. He would go himself to see.

"Make ready my chariot," he commanded.

He started out in his chariot and with him his nephew, the king of Judah, in another chariot. They met Jehu near the vineyard of Naboth. "Is it peace, Jehu?" asked the king anxiously.

The general turned fiercely on his king, and taunted him with the sins and idolatry of his mother, Jezebel.

Jehoram quickly turned his chariot and fled, calling to his nephew, "There is treachery, O Ahaziah!"

With all his might, Jehu let fly an arrow at the retreating king. It pierced his heart, and he sank down in his chariot.

They were near the fatal vineyard where Elijah had foretold the awful fate of the house of Ahab. It seems that Jehu had been present on that occasion, and now he recalled the prophet's dark words.

"Take him up and cast him in the vineyard," was his curt command.

When Ahaziah saw his uncle slain, and his body cast aside as a vile thing, he fled in terror.

"Smite him also in the chariot," Jehu called to his men.

The luckless king was wounded, but he drove as far as Megiddo before he died. He was king of Judah, and his servants carried him in a chariot to Jerusalem, where he was buried in the sepulcher of his fathers.

When Jehu drove into Jezreel, it was quickly noised about that the king was dead and a rebellion was on.

The queen-mother, Jezebel, was older than when she last appeared to threaten Elijah, but she had lost none of her former spirit. She adorned herself with head-dress and face paint, and when Jehu's chariot came close to the palace wall, she looked out and addressed him with scorn:

"Is it peace, thou Zimri, thy master's murderer?"

Jehu looked up and saw the queen in her tower-window. He thought of the sin and suffering which she had brought to Israel.

He called to her servants. "Throw her down," he said.

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THE RACE OF JEHU.

They had little love for their royal mistress. A moment later she lay dying under Jehu's chariot.

The new king had triumphed. The army was loyal to him, and now the king's city was his. There was no one who dared dispute his right to rule.

The change in Jehu was sudden. In a day he passed from an able general to a blood-thirsty king. His work of destruction was just begun. He felt that his mission was to end the house of Ahab, and to utterly destroy Baal-worship.

Jehu was a scourge. He came to avenge, but he did not reform. He could tear down idol-worship, but he did not set up God-worship with any zeal. He never rose above Jeroboam's golden calves.

He was a man of dash and courage for times of violence, but he failed as a quiet ruler. His kingdom dwindled under his care. He was no match for the wily king of Syria, who took from him possession after possession.

After a weak rule of twenty-eight years, Jehu died. He had accomplished nothing but works of vengeance.

In the British museum is a famous black obelisk with Assyrian inscriptions, in which Jehu's name appears. The king of Assyria was proud to tell how Jehu paid him tribute. "'Silver, gold, bowls of gold, cups of gold, bottles of gold, vessels of gold, maces, royal utensils, rods of wood, I received of him."

With Syria robbing him on the north, and Assyria on the east claiming his wealth and treasures, and the unfriendly Judah on the south, we can imagine that Jehu's life was not all rest and satisfaction.

QUESTIONS

Who was Jehu when he first appears in history?

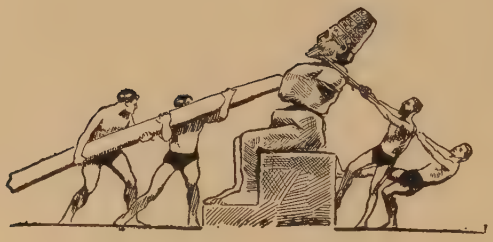
How did he happen to become a king?

Do you think that the Lord intended that he should become so full of vengeance?

What two great results did he accomplish?

Was he always working for the Lord, or chiefly for Jehu?

What does his after life prove?



CHAPTER XXXV

ATHALIAH, THE QUEEN OF JUDAH

UICKLY passing through the gates without even a glance at the guards, and into the king's court-yard in Jerusalem, rode a messenger at full speed. His own dusty appearance and his foamy, trembling horse showed that he had come in great haste.

"The king has been slain and they are bringing him home," he gasped. "They will be here by night-fall."

The greatest excitement took place. Word was sent in at once to the queen-mother that her son Ahaziah was dead.

The handsome, cruel-looking woman did not faint or wring her hands as ordinary mothers do. Her black eyes shone fiercely, and her firm lips closed more tightly as she heard the details.

It was Athaliah, the daughter of Ahab and Jezebel of Israel, who, years before, had come to Judah as the bride of Prince Jehoram. The good Jehoshaphat, the king and father of the prince, had died since then, and Athaliah had gained more and more power over her husband. When he, too, died she became queen in all but name, with her son Ahaziah on the throne.

When the royal funeral was over, and the wailers were gone, and the mourners had turned back to the affairs of everyday life, the people found Athaliah firmly seated on the throne of Judah. That she was no general favorite made no difference, for she had a strong following, and no one who valued his life cared to oppose her.

When dark rumors came from Israel that Jehu had utterly destroyed Baal and Baal-worshipers, she drew her own priests around her closer, and held frequent consultations with Mattan, her chief priest.

Then the fearful news came that Jehu had met and killed forty-two princes of Judah, nephews of Ahaziah, as they were on their way to visit the children of the king and queen of Israel.

Athaliah was spurred to action. Jehu had not only taken Israel, but he was also reaching down into Judah. If he should appear with an army, her enemies in Jerusalem would rise at once, slay her, and place one of her grandchildren on the throne. The heartless queen therefore directed that every person of the royal line should be murdered, not one grandchild was to be left to carry on the succession.

We can only imagine how fearful was this slaughter, and how the frightened people more than ever hated and feared this unnatural woman. That they did not rise in a body and put her to death, shows how weak they had become.

Athaliah settled herself back feeling that she alone in the realm had a right to the throne. Let Jehu come. Not one of the royal line was left to dispute her right.

But the wicked queen could not see what was concealed in an unused room in the temple. She never went there after she had carried away the treasures to place them in her own Baal house. The day her order was carried out to put to death all the princes, the wife of Jehoiada, the unfriendly high-priest, had snatched up a little son of the dead king, Ahaziah, a babe just a year old, and had hidden him from the fierce queen and her cruel soldiers.

The little boy, whose name was Joash, had first been taken to a room where spare bedding was kept, and later, he was carried to the part where lived Jehoiada and his wife, the aunt of little Joash.

In blissful ignorance of this little prince, Athaliah reigned with a high hand. It was no new work to her to rule. She had ruled over her husband and her son, and the nation in an indirect manner. Now she had everything her own way. Baal and Ashtoreth faith became the fashion, and only those who cared nothing for popularity, were true to the worship of God.

Athaliah ruled over Judah six years, and during this time Jehoiada had worked quietly, and with patience, to overthrow the rule of Athaliah. Meanwhile the rightful heir, Joash, was growing into lusty boyhood.

The time came for definite action. When the fatal day dawned, Athaliah little dreamed what that Sabbath was bringing to her.

Jehoiada was more than usually careful in his movements, and the queen did not suspect anything out of the ordinary, until she heard loud noises from the temple. It was not her way to send messengers to

learn the cause of the uproar. True to her nature, she herself took the lead, and, followed by her guard, she hurried to the temple.

This was no ordinary temple service which she be-

QUEEN IS DRIVEN OUT OF THE HOUSE OF JEHOVAH.

held. The trumpets and cymbals had not been heard in such rejoicing and triumph since she came to Judah. The people were shouting and clapping their hands, and what was it they were saying?

She pushed through the crowd and looked in. The

sight that met her eyes stirred all her ruling nature into fury. There by the pillar where kings were crowned, stood a little unknown boy dressed in a royal robe, and by his side stood her enemy, the priest Jehoiada, with the anointing oil and the crown. In her very ears the people shouted, "Long live the king!"

It was all clear now. Rising to her full height and extending her arms with queenly authority, she cried, "Treason! treason!" and commanded the people to kill the child.

Jehoiada was prepared for some such outbreak. Her guard was not allowed to follow her in, but was overpowered and taken away.

The ceremony of the crowning was stopped long enough for the priest to give his commands.

"Take her out," he said, "and slay anyone who follows her." When they had taken her as far as the horse gate, near the king's house, the wretched woman's life was taken.

Her disappearance added to the rejoicing. She dropped out of sight unmourned, but the evil influences of her life were not wiped out by that day's work. In the lives of kings yet to come would appear the cruel nature of this queen.

QUESTIONS

Who was the only queen of Judah?
How was she related to the king of Israel?
What was her character?
How did she influence the nation?
Who succeeded her?

CHAPTER XXXVI

JOASH, THE BOY-KING

INGS had come and gone in that old-time city, Jerusalem, but it is doubtful if any of them had a more remarkable beginning than that of Joash. It was nearly three thousand years ago, in a remote part of the city, that he sat as a little boy in the warm spring sunshine. As far back as he could remember in his life of seven years, he had played about those walls, carefully watched and guarded by women, and even kept apart from the few other children.

The little boy sighed for playmates. He did not know that his own brothers and sisters had all been put to death when he was a baby, and that he alone had been saved by his aunt, and was now kept hidden until the culmination of a carefully laid plot.

Sometimes when the shadows grew long in the evening, he was allowed to go with his nurse to the rock-cut pool for water, but mostly his days were spent looking out over the desert which rolled its dreary waste off toward the west. Or he would chase the brilliant lizards which scurried about the rocks, or he would make chains of the red and white hibiscus.

On this spring morning so long ago, the little boy

was watching the yearly transformation of the royal gardens far below him on the southeastern slopes of the hills, where were the blossoming fruit trees clothed in their pink and white beauty.

Through the still warm air there had come sounds of voices shouting, and he could see men with bright armor, with spears and shields glistening in the sun, around the king's palace.

The great time was at hand. Little Joash, who had been hidden for six years in the priest's quarters, was to be set on his father's throne, the throne of the kings of Judah, the throne that had been Solomon's.

The tumult and excitement increased, until the sounds plainly reached the priest's quarters. The women rushed about frantically embracing the boy or weeping over him. Presently there came up over the hill a company of men with weapons and with horses. Jehoiada, the priest with the piercing eyes and flowing beard, was at their head.

"The time is at hand," cried the company, and Jehoiada came into the court-yard.

They put new garments on frightened Joash, and placed him on the horse in front of his uncle, Jehoiada, and carried him away, and down into the tumult.

When the company of horsemen reached the temple, behold there were hundreds and thousands of armed men standing to the right and the left. They looked expectantly toward the little boy, who clung terror-stricken to the only person he knew, the high priest, Jehoiada. His clutching hands were loosened, and the priest carried him tenderly up a raised dais, and stood him near a pillar. Then he poured oil on

the little boy's head, put a richly embroidered robe about him, and placed a golden crown, oh, so much too large and heavy, on his head. All the people

Seven-year-old Joash Presented to the People.

clapped their hands and shouted, "Long live the king."

When the shouting had subsided, there arose the shrill voice of a woman, a beautiful but fierce and

wicked-looking woman, who gazed at him with hatred and screamed, "Treason! treason!"

A hundred men closed about her and shut her from his sight. It was not until many years after, that he knew that this fierce-looking woman was his grandmother, who had supposed all the royal heirs to be dead, and who, at the moment of his coronation, was carried away and put to death.

But the people knew all about her wickedness and death, and they were glad that she could rule over them no more. When Jehoiada said that Baal must be destroyed, they rushed to his temple and Mattan, the priest of Baal, was killed.

After this work of tearing down Baal had been finished, and when burnt-offerings had been made in the temple, the high priest led a march from the temple of God to the king's palace. The captains of the hundreds, the nobles, the governors, and all the people of the land followed Jehoiada as he brought the little Joash down from the house of the Lord and he was placed on Solomon's throne.

At once there was a change in Judah. After Jehoiada had been kept in the background so long by Athaliah and her priests, he became the real power.

For several years after the young king's crowning, peace reigned in Judah.

Jehoiada was a strong and forceful man, whose judgment and mighty will had led the scattered forces of Judah into something like obedience to the Lord's commands. The young king on the other hand was gentle and yielding, and wanted his people to be happy. His own lonely childhood led him to

look on the priest's ruling of the people as too severe.

Jehoiada, in reality, was very patient. His long experience with the sins of the people caused him to understand their weakness, and he did not expect them to change all at once.

Joash was a model king as long as he was under the influence of Jehoiada. He loved the temple as persons love the home of their childhood. As he grew older, he saw clearly how it was marred and broken, and the precious treasures which Athaliah and her priests had used in the house of Baal, were dented and shapeless, and many of them were missing.

All at once, it came to him that it was his duty to repair the temple. The king was young then, and he was impatient to have things done in a hurry.

It seems that Athaliah's reign had not left a full treasury. Joash called the Levites and priests, and when he had talked the matter over with them, it was decided that the expense of putting the temple into good repair should be met by free-will offerings of the people. A chest was set up near the house of the Lord, into which they could drop their offerings when they came up to worship. This plan was adopted with the best results. The people rejoiced to be able to give in this way. When the box was opened for the first time, they were delighted to find that it contained a rich offering. It was emptied, and again set in place for fresh offerings. After the work was done, and the temple shone fresh and new, the king and Jehoiada were glad to have a large surplus turned over to them. This was spent in making vessels needed in the temple-service, and treasures for adornment.

When Jehoiada died at the extreme age of one hundred and thirty, all Judah mourned. He had brought order from confusion and had restored the kingdom to something like prosperity.

After the old priest's death, his son Zechariah, who knew so well his father's plans for Judah, should have become the king's adviser. But, by this time, men of his own age, distant kinsmen, sought the king's company and had more influence over him than the gloomy Zechariah. That priest's thin, severe countenance, and blunt reproaches were more than unwelcome to Joash, who was now in the prime of manhood, full of vigor and absorbed with the joys of life. He turned a deaf ear to the counsels of Jehoiada's son.

"These old priests are well enough in their places," he must have said, "but I am old enough now to rule Judah in my own way."

The king was led into the habits of the dissolute princes. The people began to fall back into idolatry and corruption. Baal and Ashtoreth were restored and worshiped as in the past.

The weak king had walked in wicked ways, and his young impatience had deepened into a fiery temper. When Zechariah boldly told him to his face that he was leading the nation into evil, and that punishment would fall on him if he did not reform, Joash became furious, and ordered his people to stone to death the disagreeable priest.

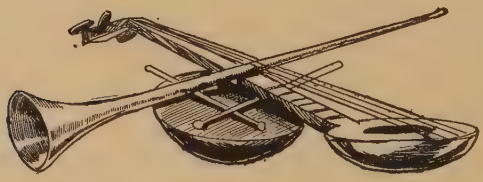
It was a vicious deed. Zechariah was the son of Jehoiada, who had been the king's best friend to the last. Besides, as Zechariah's mother was the aunt of Joash, the king and the priest were cousins.

After this, misfortunes seemed to crowd upon Judah. The people became unruly and rebellious. The old-time enemies, the Syrians, came down into Judah, killed many of the princes, took many captives, and carried away much wealth. Deserted at length by all, Joash fell an easy prey to Syria.

The king, who as a child had played in the priest's garden, was left forsaken and broken hearted, old and diseased at the age of forty-seven. His wretched life was taken by his own servants.

QUESTIONS

How was Joash saved from Athaliah?
Who was Jehoiada?
How did Joash show his love for the temple?
What change took place in Joash?
Was he easily influenced?
How did an innocent child change to a murderous king?



CHAPTER XXXVII

THE LAST STORY OF ISRAEL

ORE than a century had passed since Jeroboam divided the nation, and during all this time the northern nation had been on a downward course. Now and then there had been a short struggle for better things, but the following reign would be a decline. The impetuous Jehu had ended his work. He brought a warning but not a reformation. His weak son, Jehoahaz, was no better. With Joash, his son, our interest revives. His sincerity, and a certain manliness about him can but appeal to us. His visit to Elisha on his death-bed shows the appreciation he had of good influences. He knew what this friend of Israel had been to the nation under three kings. Entering the sick-room he wept over the dying prophet, saying, "My father, my father, the chariots of Israel and the horsemen thereof!"

The aged man was touched by the grief of the young king, and to the last he showed his interest in the misguided nation. Raising himself with difficulty, he dramatically foretold the king's coming victories over Syria.

The prophet was gone before Joash went out to

battle with the Syrians, but when the cities which his father had lost to that country were recovered, one after another, we think the victor's mind went back to Israel's friend and counselor.

An incident which forced him into an unwelcome war, shows the kindly-disposed king in a favorable

JOASH VISITS DYING ELISHA. "MY FATHER, MY FATHER."

light. 'Amaziah, the weak king of Judah, had gained a victory over the Edomites. At once he assumed that he was a great conqueror, and perhaps could restore the empire of Solomon. In his pride, he sent a boast-

ful challenge to Joash of Israel, "Come, let us look one another in the face." Joash, as became a stronger man, tried to turn him aside. But Amaziah would not heed the advice. The result of the conflict was that Judah was completely defeated. Joash accompanied Amaziah home to Jerusalem, not as an invited guest, but as his conqueror. His army broke down the wall and entered the city. Joash took possession of the king's house, and to defray the expenses of this unnecessary war, he helped himself to all he saw, gold, silver and treasures. With this wealth, and with hostages to insure good behavior, he departed for Samaria, leaving the wiser Amaziah with his dearly-bought experience.

* * *

Joash was succeeded by an abler son. The second Jeroboam raised Israel to the highest state in her history. He recovered city after city, which had gradually dropped away from what was the empire of David. He built up the commerce of the nation. The whole coast from the extreme north to the south fell under his sway. Even Damascus, the proud capital of Syria, which had so humiliated his grandfather Jehoahaz, was again brought under subjection, and made to pay tribute as in the time of Solomon.

The nation believed that it was living in the dawn of a glorious national day. Again the Hebrew race was to control the world, and Samaria was to be the great high-seat instead of Jerusalem. Prosperity flourished on every hand and luxuries increased. The rich feasted, and were merry, without stopping to ask what kind of prosperity this was.

The substantial reign of David, and the first half of Solomon's were based on right living and justice to all. The whole people shared in the good things of the day. It was the spirit of oneness which grew out of the unity of the worship of God, and the democratic principles of the Mosaic law.

Now the corrupt practices of idolatry had supplanted the simple, devout worship of David's age, and oriental despotism coming in with idolatry, had rooted out the rights of the people. The few became extremely wealthy, and the poor were reduced to half-slavery. A few large estates swallowed up the many small ancestral possessions. Luxury and riotous living followed, with leisure to plan evil.

There was a world-wide difference between this prosperity and that of David's time. It was not the dawn of a long golden day, but the sudden glory of a cloud-ribbed sunset which flooded the nation with light and beauty.

After this splendid reign of about half a century, Israel presents a scene of confusion, and weak kings came in whose names are hardly worth mentioning. Then came Menahem, who with much scheming managed to wear the crown ten years.

A new power was rising in the east to threaten all nations. It was Assyria, and with it the end of Israel was approaching.

"Pul, king of Assyria, came up against the land," says the Bible.

Menahem was alarmed. What could Israel do against such a foe! The king postponed the evil day by paying Pul a thousand talents of silver, which he

exacted from men of wealth in his kingdom. He purchased peace for himself, but he was the last king of Israel to die a natural death, and be succeeded by a son.

Conspiracy again showed its head. The last king to come to the throne by inheritance was put to death after a reign of two years.

Pekah was the assassin, a man of unusual energy. He put himself at the head of fifty of his tribesmen to bring about the revolution and he was made king. Then this energetic leader rushed the nation into another war, and hastened on the captivity.

To understand Pekah's crooked course, we must get before us a map of the situation. Side by side lay Israel and Judah, small, weak and defenceless, and surrounding them were Egypt on the south, Syria on the north, and Assyria to the east. Of these Assyria was at present the master-nation. Not only Israel and Judah feared that power, but Egypt and Syria as well. To strengthen himself against Assyria Pekah called in Syria to help him. The next part in the program would be these three united powers against Assyria.

The long-planned attack was carried out. The two royal allies dealt little Judah some heavy blows. The loss of life was fearful, but Jerusalem could not be taken.

Assyria now appeared on the scene to help distressed Judah. Syria was punished most severely. Then this avenger turned his attention to Pekah of Israel. He seized his northern possessions, and crossing the Jordan, he calmly took his territory east of

the river. With an uncertain number of Hebrew captives, he returned to Assyria.

Pekah had defeated himself. Israel was much weakened, his ally was dead, and Assyria was stronger. But worse still, at home in Samaria the people became much dissatisfied! A conspiracy was formed to put the king to death. It was led by Hoshea, who became the last king of Israel.

Hoshea is considered a good king, but he lacked both energy and judgment. With the kingdom in a deplorable state of weakness, he assumed an independence which he could not sustain.

There was a new king on the throne in Assyria, and Hoshea undertook to withhold from him the tribute which Israel had been paying. But the great Shalmaneser was not to be put off by any sudden show of independence. He came up against Samaria in great state, and frightened the king into submission.

The foolish Hoshea made another attempt to shake off the power of Assyria. He appealed to So, king of Egypt. Perhaps that king treacherously revealed the plot in order to gain the good will of the stronger Assyria. Shalmaneser heard about the embassy sent down to Egypt, and in revenge he seized the king of Israel and "shut him up and bound him in prison."

The siege of Samaria followed the sudden attack on the king. For three years the kingless city held out against the utmost efforts of Assyria. The natural fortifications of this high plateau were such as to make it almost beyond the reach of destructive forces.

It was rather a slow work of starvation, and the sufferings of the people were unspeakable. Pestilence

followed famine, and in despair, the people were forced to yield.

Then began one of the most cruel attacks on a helpless people. The brutal Assyrian soldiers made the people pay dearly for their long resistance.

The people who were left, after these murderous attacks, were compelled to make ready for a long uncertain march into captivity. What became of the Israelites we do not know. They were carried away to Media and Persia, and located in many places.

They are called the ten lost tribes, and many conjectures have been made regarding their fate. The few who were left behind at the time of the captivity, and the foreign tribes that were imported to take the place of the captives, in time became the Samaritans, who were so heartily despised by the Jews in New Testament times.

Samaria, the matchless city for strength and beauty, continued its history. The conquerors did not stop to complete its desolation, and it remained the chief city of the foreigners, who had been brought in to take the place of the Israelites in captivity. The remaining Jews in the land made Shechem their religious capital.

After many changes, Samaria was rebuilt by Herod the Great, and by him named Sebaste in honor of the Emperor Augustus.

Herod did nothing in a small way. The new Samaria was great beyond the dreams of its founder, Omri. The city was laid out on a grander scale than before, and all was surrounded by a high and strong wall. On the highest point, he left a large open space,

in the center of which he built a splendid temple in honor of Augustus. This was to be the sacred place of Samaria, as the temple was of Jerusalem. The difference was that the first was dedicated to a Roman emperor, and the second was consecrated to God.

At present Samaria is a ruin, with a few standing columns left where once lived a busy populace, and kings ruled and warred. The people as a nation were lost to the world when they were led away into captivity about twenty-six centuries ago.

QUESTIONS

What kind of a king was Joash of Israel?

What was the result of the challenge of Amaziah?

What did the second Jeroboam do for Israel?

How did the prosperity of this time differ from that of David's?

Did Jeroboam leave the nation strong?

How did Pekah come to the throne?

Why did he attack Judah?

Who was Hoshea?

Tell about the siege of Samaria.

Who were the Ten Lost Tribes?

Who were the Samaritans?

CHAPTER XXXVIII

LIGHTS AND SHADOWS

UDAH had been defied and her claims ignored. Up among the rugged hills of Edom came Amaziah, the king, at the head of a large army. After much laborious climbing and many windings in their line of march, he entered the Valley of Salt, and came to Selah.

This was the chief city of Edom, and Amaziah prepared to lay siege to it. His purpose was to punish the Edomites for withholding the tribute which Judah claimed from them.

These people had not been so easily managed of late years. Especially during the time of Joash, the father of Amaziah, had they become very independent and refused longer to be subject to Judah.

Amaziah well knew how weak had been the latter part of his father's reign, and how he had fallen in the estimation of everyone, but he tried to do a son's part to avenge all insults.

His first care had been to punish with death the court officers, or servants, who had taken his sick father's life. We like to read that in this punishment he did not include the children of the murderers as so many did in those days.

Next he made great preparations for his invasion of Edom. The people were called together for a careful numbering that he might know what kind of an army he could command.

The census showed that, above twenty years of age, Amaziah had three-hundred-thousand chosen men able to go forth to war, and who could handle spear and shield.

Many cities were strongholds by being on a high, steep hill, as Samaria and Jerusalem, but this city of Edom was strong by being in a deep basin-like valley surrounded by mountains with almost perpendicular sides. The approaches to the city were strongly guarded, and the unique city lay secure in peace and quiet.

But as secure as it was from attack, it was the worst possible place in case of a siege. The precipices which the enemy could not descend, the besieged could not scale.

How long Amaziah held his army on the hills around the city, we do not know, nor any of the particulars of the siege. In some way a battle resulted in which Amaziah was the victor. Ten thousand of the enemy were killed, and as many more taken captive.

Evidently here was a king who could not stand success. His whole nature seems to have undergone a change, and his gentleness gave place to cruelty. His army led the prisoners taken in this battle to the top of a high precipice, and threw them down the rocky side, "so that they were all broken in pieces."

The king further showed the change in himself, by bringing to Jerusalem the gods of the people he had

destroyed, and setting up those idols to be worshiped.

The prophet came to him again. "Why hast thou sought after the gods of the people which have not delivered their own people out of thy hand?" he asked.

But the Amaziah who had returned from a victory was not the meek king who had sent away the hired soldiers.

"Have we made thee of the king's counsel?" he asked haughtily. "Forbear, why shouldst thou be smitten?"

The prophet turned from him, hopelessly, "I know that God hath determined to destroy thee," he said.

The vainglorious king after this victory sent the boastful challenge to Joash of Israel, "Come, let us look one another in the face." The result proved fatal to the king. Dissatisfaction reigned in Jerusalem when the people saw their despoiled city. Only thirty years before they had tried to better a bad situation by slaying Amaziah's father, Joash, and they resorted to the same bloody means now. A conspiracy was formed, and the king paid for his folly with his life.

Uzziah, the crown-prince, was a little lad of five years when his father was slain. He was too young to understand the high position and the heavy cares waiting for him, but others did, and he was put under the careful training of Zechariah. As early as his sixteenth year, this youth was brought into the full glare of public life as king of Judah. Before many years he became a war-hero.

The Philistines, the Arabians, and the Ammonites were the old-time enemies whom he had to meet and subdue, before he could have peace on his borders. It

was not long before these troublesome neighbors began to fear this king, who was so skillful in his sudden attacks and who took so many of their strongholds.

The king was a military genius. The improvements he made in warfare are surprising. For his large standing army of nearly a third of a million of men, he prepared "shields, and spears, and helmets, and coats of mail, and bows, and stones for slinging." He also invented, or introduced, machinery for hurling projectiles. These engines were set up on the towers and battlements in Jerusalem, and the immense arrows and huge stones they could crash into an approaching enemy appeared to the people of simpler warfare as something marvelous. But what is especially interesting in this king is that he, a man of war, was a lover of peaceful pursuits.

He was a many-sided man, and his great enthusiasm in all departments of life inspired his people of all classes. He would turn with delight from the battlefield to the pastures and fields of Judah. His large herds of cattle ranged his extensive pastures in the wilderness, in the valleys and on the plains. By hewing out immense cisterns in the solid rock, and building great towers or tanks for the rain which fell in the wet seasons, he provided for times of drouth.

The primitive work of tilling the soil was not too humble for the attention of this king. A nature like his takes delight in all the marvels of seed-sowing and harvest. The heavy cares of the nation slipped from him when he went out into his fields and came in touch with mother-earth.

The Bible says also that he "loved husbandry." We can imagine that his many fertile valley-fields became models to the humbler farmers around, and his rich

KING UZZIAH BEFORE THE GOLDEN ALTAR.

vineyards on the hillsides were pictures of plenty and beauty.

It was a pity that this great man could not content himself with all these varied pursuits, without assuming an office which belonged to the priests alone. His

many successes and great wealth had made him proud and overbearing. He walked boldly into the temple to perform the sacred ceremony of burning incense on the golden altar.

In horror the chief-priest, and his eighty associate priests, rushed in after him to persuade him to leave the temple. Their appeal was in vain, for Uzziah had reached the stage when he would stand no interference with his wishes. He turned an angry countenance on the priests, and resumed his work. As he took up the censer in his hand, the priests saw the mark of God's displeasure. On the king's forehead appeared a leprous spot.

In greater horror, the priests hastened to thrust him out of the holy temple. The humbled king was, himself, anxious to hide from the stern faces of the outraged priests.

From that day till death came to relieve him, he was doomed to live in a separate house, shut out from his family, and cut off from public life. When he died, he could not be buried in the sepulcher of the kings since he was a leper, but in the field of burial which belonged to the kings.

His son Jotham was a good man, but he was altogether different from his father Uzziah. We hear nothing about military inventions, large pastures and fields. He did his work faithfully, but in no case is it said that he "loved" his work.

His whole time was taken up with preparations to defeat a plot laid by Israel and Syria. Before his enemies appeared, Jotham died a peaceful death and was buried with high honors.

The life of Ahaz, the son of Jotham, is a black shadow on Judah's history. Not only did he restore all the idols that were ever known there, but he introduced new ones. The very lowest practices of idolatry calling for human sacrifice, have the first mention in this reign.

The old plot of the two nations on the north to make Judah a province with a Syrian ruler, had been much talked about during his father's lifetime. That king had always been adding to his defences so as to be ready for these enemies.

Now they came, but the weak Ahaz was not ready for them. Pekah of Israel and Rezin of Syria made war on him. They slew many, and took captive even greater numbers. Rezin carried his prisoners to Damascus where they probably became slaves. Pekah led his to Samaria in proud triumph, but he was frightened by a prophet, into returning them, as it was against the law of his country to enslave kinsmen.

Again Pekah and Rezin came before Jerusalem in war. This time it was a joint attack, and their object was to kill Ahaz, and place on the throne a son of Syria. The king and people were shaken with fear.

The attack was not successful, but other troubles followed. On every hand, Ahaz was hemmed in by moving dangers. The Edomites were in a state of active hostilities, the Philistines had again become roused, and were capturing town after town belonging to Judah, Egypt might always be regarded with suspicion, and there was no telling what would be the next move on the part of Israel and Syria. Ahaz was at bay, and in despair he turned to Assyria.

That power gladly embraced the opportunity of settling troubles between nations. Then this powerful chastiser held out his hand for a royal reward. There was no help for it, Judah was now a vassal.

In this state of affairs, Ahaz died. The nation had no longer any standing among the world-powers, its national religion belonged to the past, the treasury was empty, the temple had been despoiled, and everything seemed to be tottering.

The weak and wicked king who had brought about this condition, was not buried in the royal sepulcher.

QUESTIONS

What kind of a man did Amaziah appear to be in his first period?

How did his victory over the Edomites change him?

What foolish challenge did he send?

How did the people of Jerusalem regard this war?

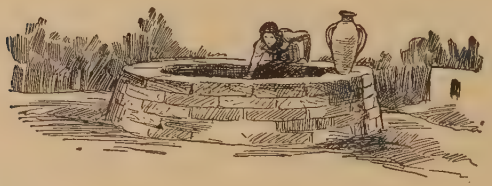
How old was Uzziah when he became king?

What did he do for warfare?

How did he overstep his limits, and what happened to him?

How did Ahaz open his reign?

To what king did Ahaz turn for help?



CHAPTER XXXIX

THE AWAKENING

HEZEKIAH differed so entirely from his father that we must take his life to be a tribute to a good mother's influence. All we know about her is that she was Abijah, daughter of Zechariah.

Throughout his childhood and up to the age of twenty-five, he had been obliged to see the neglect and desecration of the temple, and the most revolting idol worship in the holy city of Jerusalem. Perhaps he and his mother had often talked over the reforms that would come in with his kingly power, and his godly grandfather, Zechariah, had filled his mind with lofty ideas of God-worship, and of all the duties that would come to him as king of Judah.

No sooner was he seated on the throne, than he entered upon a thorough religious revival. The temple itself received the first attention. Its doors which had been broken and disfigured, were repaired, and the precious gold decorations restored. When the outer ones, which Ahaz had closed and perhaps nailed up, were again left invitingly open, the people saw the good old days returning to Judah.

Hezekiah called together a large company of

priests and Levites in the wide, open place on the east side of the temple. It was a memorable occasion. The king appeared before the company, and spoke to them as one who was suffering with them for the past sins. He, probably, recalled how his father had brought Judah to the lowest state in her history.

The first rule of the Hebrew people was for cleanliness. They could not approach God without first cleansing themselves, and everything used in worship. "Sanctify yourselves, and sanctify the house of Jehovah," commanded Hezekiah. Then followed such a time of thorough cleansing as had not been seen since the time of Asa.

This much-needed cleaning occupied sixteen days, eight days to purify the workers and cleanse the temple, as far as the porch, and eight more days for the temple proper. The Levites finished their work first. The priests then removed all uncleanness, which had accumulated from the inner court to the Holy of Holies. The Levites carried away the refuse and dumped it in the brook Kidron. The remains of heathen sacrifices were there, and the filthiness of heathen customs. After the priests got started in this work, they undoubtedly wondered at their long tolerance of such practices in their holy temple.

Unusual preparations had been made for a burnt-offering, and a sin-offering, for the Hebrew race. The occasion was made doubly impressive by an accompanying orchestra and chorus.

The Levites stood with cymbals and harps, and the priests with trumpets. "When the burnt-offering began, the song of Jehovah began also." The day long

prayed for had come to the faithful. "All the assembly worshiped, and the singers sang, and the trumpeters sounded; all this continued until the burnt-offering was finished." They all sang praises with gladness, and "the king and all that were with him, bowed themselves and worshiped."

A proclamation went out for a national passover. The king and his princes sent letters through all Judah and Israel, from Dan in the north, to Beersheba in the south. "Yield yourselves to Jehovah, and enter into his sanctuary," was the burden of the message.

The usual seven days of the passover did not satisfy the enthusiasm of the people, and after consultation, they entered on another week "of gladness." For this additional week the king and the princes furnished the sacrifices. It was a wonderful fortnight in Jerusalem. Nothing had equalled it in the memory of anyone.

The great jubilee was followed by substantial results. Idolatry and all traces of it were banished. The king called for free-will offerings, and so generously did the newly awakened people respond, that the king had rooms prepared for the treasures. As they came in, the offerings were sanctified for temple use, and consecrated persons were placed in charge of them.

But Judah had to turn away from the deeper delights of worship to observe what neighboring nations were about. War was the great game played by the world's rulers, and all nations had to endure the hardship. Judah had to stand her share of the world-wide

uneasiness. At that time the struggle for greatest power lay between Egypt and Assyria, and little Judah was the convenient highway between the two. There was little chance of escape from this conflict.

Perhaps Hezekiah hastened a direct attack by refusing to pay tribute to the king of Assyria. This was as good as a declaration of war. As soon as Sennacherib, the new king of Assyria, could perfect his plans, he came into Judah on his way to Egypt. The fenced cities he took as a little side-play, and advanced towards Jerusalem.

Hezekiah did all he could to prevent a long siege by concealing the fountains outside the walls, and conducting the water-supply into the city. He strengthened the walls, building them higher, with higher towers, and stronger fortifications.

But it was all in vain, and to raise the enormous tribute which Assyria exacted, he had to strip the temple doors and pillars of their gold. He bought a short time of peace.

The respite was brief. Hezekiah soon received a threatening and insulting letter from Sennacherib, deriding the faith of Judah, and boasting how the God of their faith would fall before his attacks.

Hezekiah was alarmed and deeply offended. To buy Sennacherib off again was out of the question, and besides that would be only a postponement. He went to the Lord in prayer, and spread out the letter before Him, that the unholy scorn and boasting of Sennacherib might be seen in a strong light.

It would be hard to find a more striking contrast than that between this pious king on his knees before

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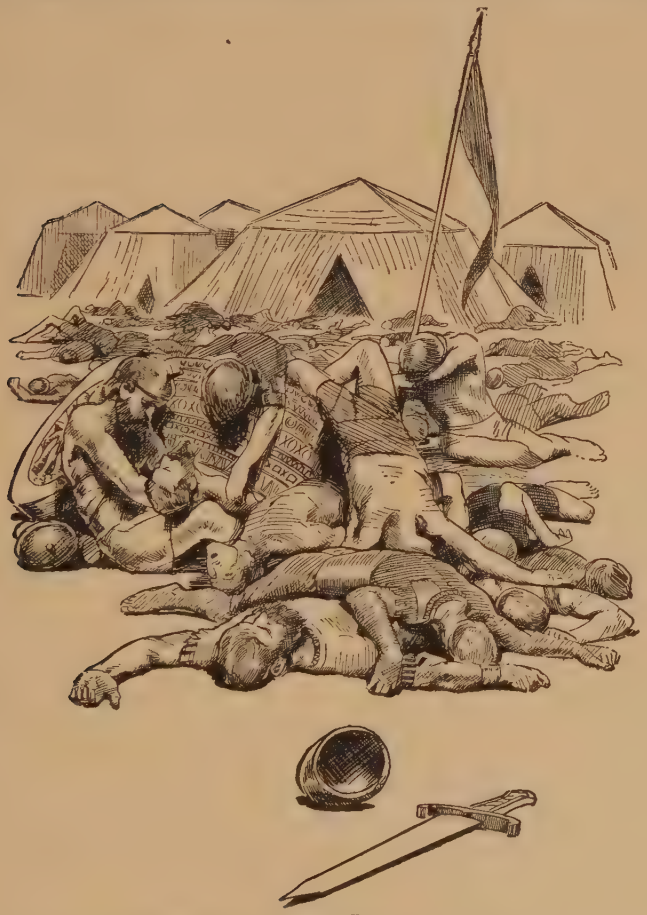
"HEAR THE WORDS OF THE KING OF ASSYRIA!"

God, humbly claiming the promised deliverance of those that feared Him, and the rabble from Assyria running up and down outside the walls of Jerusalem,



DESTRUCTION OF SENNACHERIB.

shouting their brutal threats and messages to the people on the walls and in the watch towers.

The prayer of Hezekiah was answered in the Assyrian camp. The large army was not given a chance

to appear before Jerusalem. In the still night, when nothing but the sentinel's calls should have been heard, the greatest confusion and distress arose in the camp. In some mysterious way 185,000 men perished, who were the flower of the Assyrian army. The Bible simply states that the angel of the Lord smote them.

After such a severe blow, the king of Assyria could do nothing but return to his capital, Nineveh. Here a more fatal disaster overtook him. While he was worshiping in the temple of his god, probably sacrificing to appease his angry god, he was murdered by his own sons.

The next view we have of Hezekiah is on a sick bed. The prophet Isaiah felt that the end was near, and he came to warn the king to prepare for death. The prophet's heart was heavy, but stern duty was never shirked.

The king loved life, and was sad to leave his kingdom so soon. He turned his face to the wall and wept and prayed. He repented that he had become proud, and too great in his own sight, after the destruction of Sennacherib.

The people lamented the coming loss of their king, and prayers and sacrifices went up for his recovery. What Isaiah did we are not told, but when the Lord showed him that Hezekiah's life would be prolonged fifteen years, it was with a light step that he hurried to inform the king. Besides, he revealed that God would defend Jerusalem against Assyria.

What a change in the affairs of king and nation! Instead of death, followed, perhaps, by the taking of Jerusalem by Sennacherib, fifteen years of peace were

promised. To strengthen this promise a sign was given, and the sun-dial of Ahaz was brought into play. This consisted of a series of steps with a staff on the top to measure time. The shadow on the dial turned back ten steps. There was rejoicing on every hand, and Hezekiah celebrated his recovery by writing a beautiful song of thanksgiving which is given in the book of Isaiah.

Honor and riches poured in on the king. He built treasure-houses for the gold, silver, precious stones, and other riches, and storehouses to hold the wonderful "increase of grain and new wine and oil; and stalls for all manner of beasts, and flocks in folds."

In his highest prosperity he showed the commonest weakness. The king of Babylon took occasion to send him a letter of congratulation and a royal present. This appears to have been but a pretext to hide his real design. He was seeking to form an alliance with Judah and Egypt, against the stronger power, Assyria.

Hezekiah felt flattered. His fame had reached even Babylon, whose king showed such interest in his recovery. He received the ambassadors in a princely way, and showed them the riches of his kingdom.

The prophet Isaiah suddenly appeared before the self-satisfied king. "What said these men, and from whence came they?" was the searching question.

"They came from a far country unto me, even from Babylon," answered the king, half-boastfully.

But Isaiah's words did not encourage his pride. When he learned that they had been shown everything of value in the kingdom, he drew aside the cur-

tain from before the future, and in turn, showed the king what would come from his mistake.

"The days are coming, when all that is in thy house and that which they fathers have laid up in store until this day, shall be carried to Babylon," he said. This was the first mention of the coming Babylonian captivity of Judah.

Hezekiah's pride certainly caused him to blunder. The fatal result came later, but he was allowed to live and die as a successful king of Judah. The nation did him honor at his death, and buried him in the ascent of the sepulchres of the sons of David.

QUESTIONS

Was Hezekiah very young when he was made king?

Do you think that he was pleased with his father's reign?

What was his first kingly activity?

How had the temple been used under Ahaz?

Do you recall what the passover represented?

How did Hezekiah prepare for this passover?

How long did it last?

Were there any good results?

Are people ready to give when their interest is aroused?

Tell about the destruction of Sennacherib.

Do you recall the poem, "The Destruction of Sennacherib," by Lord Byron?

What mistake did he make when he received the men from Babylon?

Was Babylon so very far away that he need feel so proud of his fame reaching that country?

CHAPTER XL

A TIME OF SIN AND WEAKNESS

CROWNED at the age of twelve, Manasseh started out on a long reign of fifty-five years, the longest of all of Judah'skings. Atthat early age, he showed little of the ruler who was to plunge the nation into the darkest of sins.

There is no doubt about it, Manasseh took after his wicked grandfather, Ahaz. If we were studying heredity, we could trace the bad strain back through six kings to Athaliah, and from her to Jezebel and corrupt Phoenicia. Then we would understand better why God forbade his people to marry into nations of idolatry.

Manasseh was fortunate in taking charge of a nation which his upright father had put into a wholesome condition. That was the secret of Manasseh's long reign.

But in another respect he was very unfortunate. Instead of having careful training under a good prophet, he at once fell under the influence of those who had never sympathized with Hezekiah and his sweeping reforms, but who still clung to their idols.

The young king was in the leading strings of the wily Shebna, the most cunning of his class. He had

been treasurer of the palace under Hezekiah, but had to step down to a lower position, it seems, because of his lack of honor. This was the man who kept very close to the boy-king.

Cut loose from the strict laws of Hezekiah, the young king and his court plunged headlong into idol-worship, with all the loose and reckless ways of heathen nations. With the help of his new friends, he set out at once to undo the good work of his father.

The religion of the land was changed as fast as king and followers could bring it about. No more were praises to God sung to the sound of cymbal and trumpet. Instead, unholy sacrifices were offered in the high places, and altars for Baal and Ashtoreth again filled the city and land.

"How like Ahaz," we say, when we read about this novelty-loving king. There was no new religion which did not attract him. Eastern star-worship appealed to him, and even in the two courts of the temple "he built altars for all the host of heaven." But he stooped to lower worship. The Bible says that "he made his children pass through the fire."

The idol Moloch was represented as having the hands of a human being, but the head of an ox. This monster image was made of brass and was hollow. Under him was a pit of fire, and the children that were laid on the extended arms were supposed to slip down into this fire. This was believed to be pleasing to the fierce god.

But those blind idolaters had human hearts, and they would save their children if possible. The god Moloch was often cheated by having something re-

sembling a child placed in his arms, perhaps a ragdoll, while the parents were given credit for offering the real child. In other cases, children would be passed quickly through the fire, practically unharmed, while Moloch took for granted that they had dropped into the pit. But in many cases, especially if the parents were poor and humble, the children were actually sacrificed by the distracted people.

Such was the idolatry which Manasseh established to take the place of the Jehovah worship of his father. To such monstrous evils he added that of superstition. No kind of witch-craft was too coarse for him, and fortune-telling became a king's pastime.

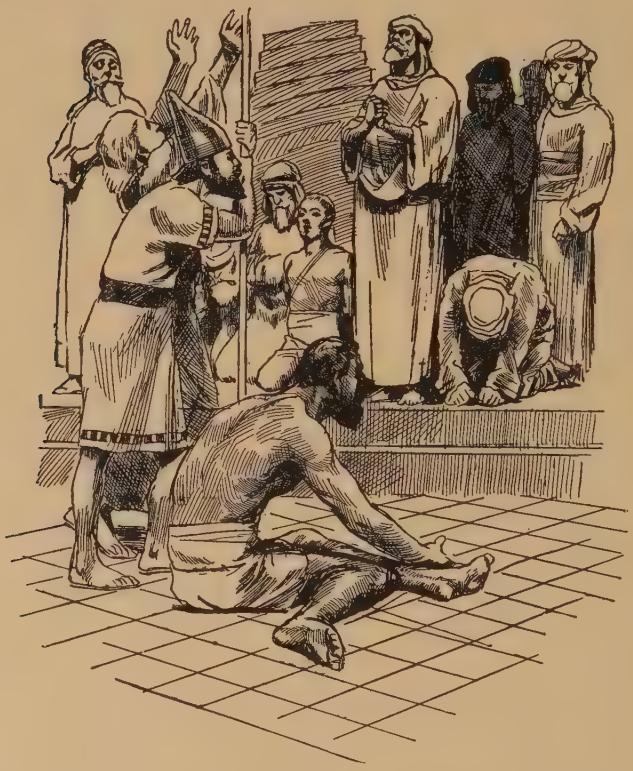
We can imagine that the kingdom was soon overrun by witches, sorcerers, magicians and fortune-tellers. Every wickedness of heathen nations he introduced, until the Bible states that Judah did greater evil than did the heathen nations which were destroyed in the land to give their place to the Israelites.

Manasseh heeded no warnngs. We are not surprised to learn that he became cruel as well as an idolator. In the persecutions of those who opposed him, and in his terrible sacrifices, he "shed innocent blood very much, till he filled Jerusalem from one end to another." But the mad king was soon to receive a check. He had reached the limit of his course.

When Manasseh came in touch with other nations, he acted in an unwise way. At that time Assyria and Egypt were in constant warfare. It is probable that Judah had nothing to do with the struggle, but it is likely that Manasseh favored his neighbor, Egypt, and too openly showed his preference.

Assyria resented it, and prepared to give the king a lesson. The large army that was in the field to fight with Egypt, turned aside and came to Jerusalem.

Manasseh was captured in a very undignified way.



MANASSEH, A CAPTIVE IN BABYLON, HUMBLES HIMSELF.

It seems that Assyria did not care particularly for the city or the people, though the land of Judah had been laid waste, but wanted possession of the king.

He tried to escape, whether in a battle or in single pursuit, we do not know. The Assyrians gave chase,

and caught him in a thicket of thorns. He was put in "hooks and chains" and taken to Babylon.

We can picture this proud king as he sat in this foreign prison in deep dejection. He was no longer a monarch with power to change his nation as he pleased. He had ample time to think of his dark past. Without doubt, he recalled all he had heard about his father, and he could easily compare their reigns.

All around him could be seen what idolatry would lead to. He now shrank from the vile practices, which he had set up in his realm with so much zeal. His eyes were opened to his crimes and his sins.

Chains and captivity did for Manasseh, what prosperity or the warnings of priest and prophet had failed to do. He became very penitent, and made great promises if God would return him to his kingdom.

His first despair left him, and in his prison he sat picturing to himself how he would transform his little kingdom, if he could be allowed to return.

God read his heart and saw true repentance there. He must have considered, too, how young this king was, when he fell into the hands of bad advisers. He forgave him, and his deliverance was at hand.

The king of Assyria decided to send Manasseh back to his throne. It is likely that he was well paid for it, and that Judah gave tribute after that, but anything was better than a dungeon in Babylon.

As soon as Manasseh was back among his people, he gave proof of his conversion. His religious reforms struck all Judah with amazement. The idols and images which he had set up in the temple, and all

the foreign gods which had been so honored in Jerusalem, were now torn down and cast out. We can see his army of destroyers hastening, from city to city, to do away with those reminders of the sinful past.

The altars of God were restored, and put to the right use. Peace-offerings and thanksgiving went up from the temple, which had been formerly polluted with idols.

After this we would expect to hear of great and valiant deeds, but they do not appear. The king's stay in Babylon, of about a year, had showed him the power of the enemy, and he set to work to strengthen his own kingdom.

Jerusalem received the first attention. The walls and other fortifications, which, perhaps, had not been repaired since the attacks when the king was taken captive, were repaired, and captains of war were stationed in all the walled cities.

It is likely that his conversion came too late in life for him to do great things. His long reign which should have been full of noble deeds, is told of very briefly. Sin stole away his opportunities, and vice took away his strength and kingly power. Conversion cannot bring back what is wasted in wickedness.

The conclusion is brief. "Manasseh slept with his fathers, and they buried him in his own house."

One trouble with families where the fathers reform after years of evil doing, is that their grown sons do not often reform with them.

Manasseh had been in Babylon in hooks and chains and became penitent, but his son Amon who succeeded him, had not.

There is little to be said about this king and his short reign of two years. He was weak and corrupt, and his own court officers took it upon themselves to rid the nation of him.

The people, who had never been in sympathy with Manasseh's reforms, and who had rejoiced when this son came to restore their idols, grieved over his death, and promptly slew the assassins. Then they made his son, young Josiah, king in his stead.

QUESTIONS

How old was Manasseh when his father Hezekiah died?

How did he differ from his father?

What relative of Manasseh had introduced Moloch worship?

How was Manasseh punished?

What effect did it have on his life?

How long was this reign?

Why was not his life full of good and great deeds?

If a king like Manasseh was proud of his noble father, what would he think of himself?

Did the late conversion of Manasseh affect his son Amon?

CHAPTER XLI

THE GOOD YOUNG KING JOSIAH

OUNG Josiah was made king of Judah at such an early age that he must have dropped his toys to receive the scepter. This best-loved of all Judah's kings lived a life so wise and beautiful, that a band of gold should encircle the story of it to set it off from what precedes and what follows.

It was a glad day in Jerusalem when the little eight-year-old boy was brought forward to be crowned. The tragic death of his father, Amon, which had cast such a gloom over the land was forgotten when the people beheld this promising king. He was evidently attractive, with that high-minded, dignified bearing which promised so well for the future.

The little king heard long conversations among the leading men on the many dangers that were threatening the nation. There seemed to be foes on every side. His grandfather Manasseh, and his father Amon, had done little to strengthen the kingdom, and watchful neighbor kings were quick to take advantage of any weakness.

Josiah was to be trained for great duties, and the good high-priest, Hilkiah, became his teacher. It

was no light task to take charge of a king, and to see that he was directed, and not led. In a very short time he would be master not only of himself but of the nation. We think that Hilkiah was an unusually wise teacher.

It was Judah's good fortune to have a few years of quiet, while the king was growing up. This was due to the fact that Assyria, which had been filling with terror all that part of the world, was beginning to show signs of weakening. It meant, only, that some other nation was growing stronger, but that power had not yet become threatening, and Judah had a feeling of relief and safety. It was worth much to feel easy, if only for a few years.

Josiah quietly developed until his sixteenth year. Then he showed clearly the bent of his nature, and the result of his training. "While he was yet young he began to seek after the God of David his father."

This seeking after God was quite different from the conversion of his wicked grandfather, Manasseh. He had been driven to piety, by suffering and fear, but Josiah turned to God by the simple sincerity of his noble nature.

At twenty when he had reached full manhood, according to the Jewish law, his larger activities began.

At that time a stranger-nation loomed up, threateningly, above the horizon. It was the Scythians from their home in the north who made their way through mountain passes, and proceeded to lay waste the country around the Great Sea. They were the fiercest of half-savage nations, and their number seemed

to have no counting. Egypt was their destination, but wherever they were, they warred and plundered.

All countries were overcome with fear, and growing accounts of their number and fierceness spread from land to land. On their way to Egypt, they kept close to the coast, and they came no nearer Judah than to cause fear and trembling.

It was under such circumstances that the people would stop to hear warnings, and Josiah took advantage of this time to open his great reforms.

It was a work requiring courage. Here was a young king of twenty taking his stand against customs of generations. The people, many of them, had become attached to their idols. Since the days of Hezekiah's reforms, more than half a century had gone by, and most of those who were under Josiah had been born and trained in idolatry. It was no small thing for the king to break up idol-worship.

He repeated all the reforms of his great-grandfather, Hezekiah, but he went farther still. He removed the "high places" which dated back to the days of Samuel and even farther.

Over three centuries before, the mission of this young king had been foretold. When Jeroboam the first king of Israel, stood before his newly erected altar at Bethel, to offer sacrifice before the golden calf, a prophet came in and rebuked him. He predicted that a king, named Josiah, would burn the bones of the idolaters upon the altar. It took a long time for this prophecy to be fulfilled, but the time had come at last.

Josiah started out on a personal tour of inspection

to see that his reforms were carried out. At Bethel, which once belonged to Israel, he saw the altar of Jeroboam, and behind him were the tombs of those who had worshiped idols. He took the bones and

KING JOSIAH LISTENS TO READING OF LAW OF JEHOVAH.

burnt them on the altar, and then destroyed the altar. In this manner he proceeded to the extreme southern point.

The king's word was law, but deep-rooted custom cannot be changed by a command. It took him six years to make a deep impression on the religion of the people, and to turn their hearts to higher things.

To renovate the temple was a most sacred work. It was a labor of love to Josiah. Every nook and corner of the temple was ransacked. In a hidden place where it had lain neglected and forgotten, the priest Hilkiah came across the book of the law of God. It was probably a copy of the book known to us as Deuteronomy. How long it had been there we do not know, but it came forth as if it had been a fresh revelation from God.

Hilkiah handed it to the scribe Shaphan, and he, in turn, came to the king saying, "Hilkiah the priest hath delivered me a book."

King Josiah, naturally, wanted to know the contents of the book. From the opening sentence he was all attention. His face showed both surprise and awe. As the reading continued, and Josiah heard more of the law, which his nation had so thoroughly disregarded, he rent his clothes to express his grief.

When he had heard the book, he at once appointed a committee to investigate the matter, and learn what the fate of the nation would be because of disobedience.

They went to the prophetess Huldah, and that godly woman was filled with the spirit of prophecy. She told them of evil, which would overwhelm Judah, because of the wickedness and weakness of many generations. One good reign could not save the nation. There could be no other fate for a people who had run

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THE FINDING OF THE LAW

after all the gods of heathen nations, and absorbed their sins. But young Josiah, she said, would be spared. He was tender-hearted, and penitent for the sins of his nation. The evil would be postponed for his sake, and he was not to see the suffering of his people.

The king was thoroughly aroused. Without delay he called together his priests and Levites, and all the people both great and small, to hear the law read. He wanted to bind the people by a pledge. In this he took the lead. "He stood in his place, and made a covenant before Jehovah." He pledged himself "to keep his commandments, and his testimonies, and his statutes with all his heart and with all his soul." He asked all the people of Judah and of Benjamin to rise with one accord, and give the same promise.

It was not difficult to persuade his nation, for the people loved their king and had confidence in him. Whatever he did, they were very willing to do. The covenant to God became general.

The time was ripe for a great passover, and everything was ready. The king was the leading spirit. He set the priests in their offices and encouraged them in every way. He instructed the Levites, who had carried the ark about in their teachings, to set it in the temple, that it should no more be a burden to their shoulders. It is supposed that this custom of carrying the ark about, arose during some reign like Ahaz's or Manasseh's, when everything in the temple was in danger of being profaned by idolatry.

The king led in offerings as well. He gave thirty thousand lambs and kids for sacrifice, and three thou-

sand bullocks. The princes followed his example and gave free-will offerings. The chief priest, and his associates, vied with the others in their generosity, and lastly, the Levites came forward with their numerous passover offerings.

Everything proceeded with order and law. This passover which lasted the usual seven days surpassed anything of the kind since the days of Samuel, in the number of offerings by king, princes, priests and Levites. Perhaps it had not the enthusiasm of Hezekiah's passover, which was continued through two weeks, but it was made to conform more closely to the law.

Josiah was a religious reformer, not a warrior. We are not told that he looked so much to fortifications and strongholds to shut out foes, as he did to get the nation into the right path, and to direct it in justice and morality.

After many years during which we are not given any detail of his work, Egypt came again to the front, and aspired to be the chief world-power. To accomplish this, King Necho II, with an immense army was moving north to attack Assyria.

For some reason, Josiah disputed this king's right to pass through territory under his control, and went out to stop him. It was such a mistake as the wisest sometimes make.

Necho tried to avoid a conflict with Josiah. He sent ambassadors to him with the message, "What have I to do with thee, thou King of Judah? I come not against thee today, but against the house wherewith I have war."

This should have made Josiah hesitate, but he was determined to turn the great host aside out of his territory. Perhaps he feared that on Egypt's return from Assyria, Judah, too, would be taken.

The forces met on the battle-plain of Esdraelon. Memorable battles had been fought here, but this one was the most tragic in its results.

Josiah in his war-chariot drove from rank to rank, to set his men in the best array. But he did not have a chance to show his skill as a general. At the very outset, like Ahab of Israel, he was struck by the chance arrow of an Egyptian archer, and was mortally wounded.

It was a dark moment to Josiah. In his death he saw the defeat of his army, and probably the end of his beloved nation.

He turned to his men with a last request, "Bear me away to my traveling chariot, for I am sore wounded."

When the retreating army reached Megiddo, the king died, and with him died, also, the last bright hope of Judah.

The return to Jerusalem was the saddest march the army of Judah had ever known in any age. It is safe to say that no other king had ever been so generally loved and trusted.

Jerusalem had never before had such a mourning. In eastern countries in that day, the people gave full expression to their feelings. There was no effort made to hide a broken heart, and when the body was brought in, followed by the wailing army, the whole city joined in the mourning. The Bible says, "The

land mourned, every family apart. All Judah joined Jerusalem in loud lamentations." "And all the singing men and the singing women spake of Josiah in their lamentations unto this day."

It was a deeper sorrow than mere grief for the loss of a beloved king. It meant the death-knell of the fondest hopes of a nation. Without this ruling spirit teaching them to trust in Providence, what could they do with dangers closing in around them?

Josiah had accomplished his mission. The result of sin and disobedience was hastening to the nation, but the king had been promised that he should not see the sufferings of his people. He remained to them a national hero, whose high services to his people became embodied in song and story. But the nation was left sorely bereaved.

QUESTIONS

What was Josiah's character as a child?

How did he differ from his father Amon, and his grandfather Manasseh?

Does a teacher have anything to do with a child's character?

How did he apply himself when he had reached the age of sixteen years?

What did he undertake to do when he had full power, or was "of age"?

Do you think Josiah was just to the poor and humble?

What was the only thing that he did which seemed to be a mistake?

How did the people receive the news of his death?

CHAPTER XLII

THE FALL OF JUDAH

ADNESS and gloom fell over Jerusalem with the death of the beloved King Josiah, and the people sat in sackcloth and ashes. What a struggle and tragic fate awaited the hapless sons of the lamented Josiah! On them, and on the last of the nation, would fall the result of centuries of disobedience and sin.

The crown-prince Eliakim was not liked by the people of Jerusalem, and his brother, Jehoahaz, was placed on the throne in his stead. Eliakim did not appreciate this selection, and it seems likely that he appealed to the king of Egypt to be restored to his rights.

Necho responded and resorted to strategy. He invited Jehoahaz to visit him at Riblah, and when the young king was in his power, he carried him down to Egypt in chains. Then Necho raised Eliakim to the throne, and changed his name to Jehoiakim.

Judah was thus placed under the authority of Egypt, and, besides, the nation had to pay Necho tribute-money for his services in selecting an unwelcome king. It would seem that the new king would have been glad to pay his way to the throne out of

the king's treasury, which Josiah had left full to overflowing, but Jehoiakim had other use for his wealth, and the people were obliged to raise the tribute for Egypt.

His admiration for Egypt was boundless, and he would imitate King Necho's splendors as far as possible. The royal houses of Jerusalem were too narrow and simple for this ambitious king, and a magnificent palace, like those of his master-monarch in Egypt, was built in Jerusalem. The prophet Jeremiah tells how this "wide and spacious" palace was built. This gorgeous structure of vermilion color, with ceilings of cedar, was erected "by unrighteousness, by injustice, by using his neighbor's services without wages."

A most important and spectacular event took place about this time. The two strongest nations met in one of the world's great battles. Nebuchadnezzar, king of Babylon, and the Chaldeans, came against Necho, king of Egypt. On this battlefield was seen the struggle, which would decide who should have the rule of southwestern Asia and northern Africa. All the smaller countries were watching to see which would become their master.

Babylon won, and Nebuchadnezzar became the most powerful monarch of his time. Egypt's power in Judah was broken, and Jeremiah wrote an ode of triumph on the fall of the ancient enemy. At the same time, he foresaw what the victory of Babylon would mean to the fate of his country.

The news of Egypt's defeat threw Jerusalem into a tumult. The king's protector was powerless, and

Babylon would turn on Jerusalem. Jehoiakim was confused, and proclaimed a national fast, as the only thing he could do.

The ever watchful Jeremiah seized this as an opportunity to make the careless leaders listen to his warnings. The princes were called together to hear his earlier prophecies, some of which were being fulfilled. The princes were impressed. Something must be done to save the nation, and if the prophet had any remedy, let it be given them.

"We want the king to hear the prophecies," they said, but knowing his cruel, unreasonable disposition, they advised the prophet and his scribe to hide.

When Jehoiakim heard the reading, he was beside himself with anger. The same old evil prophecies! Like a wilful child, he seized the roll and cut it into pieces, and to complete the destruction, he burned the pieces. Then he sent his officers to bring in Jeremiah and his scribe Baruch. His efforts were in vain. They could not be found, the destroyed prophecies were rewritten, and in time they came to pass.

It was not long before Jehoiakim had real cause to fear his fate. The king of Babylon came up against Jerusalem, took the city, and put the king in chains and fetters. The haughty Jehoiakim saw nothing but captivity before him. Then, for some reason, the great conqueror relented, and he was put back on the throne as a feeble vassal king. When Nebuchadnezzar finally turned his back on the frightened city, among the captives he carried away was the youth, Daniel.

Jehoiakim seemed bent on his own destruction. Babylon was far away, and Egypt close at hand. He listened to the flattering promises of his old ally, and refused to pay tribute to Nebuchadnezzar.

This monarch was busy at home, but he turned on Jerusalem a much fiercer foe. His vassals, the Syrians, the Moabites, and the Ammonites were only too glad to attack their old enemy. The whole country suffered terribly at the hands of these cruel avengers. The city and king were humbled into the dust. Soon after this, Jehoiakim died, "unhonored and unmourned."

His helpless son Jehoiachin had a short reign. Rumors of another revolt reached the ears of the king of Babylon, and he sent his army against Jerusalem. He himself came on, in time for the closing scene. It was an unconditional surrender. The boy-king and his queen-mother, and the court went out to Nebuchadnezzar, and gave themselves into his power.

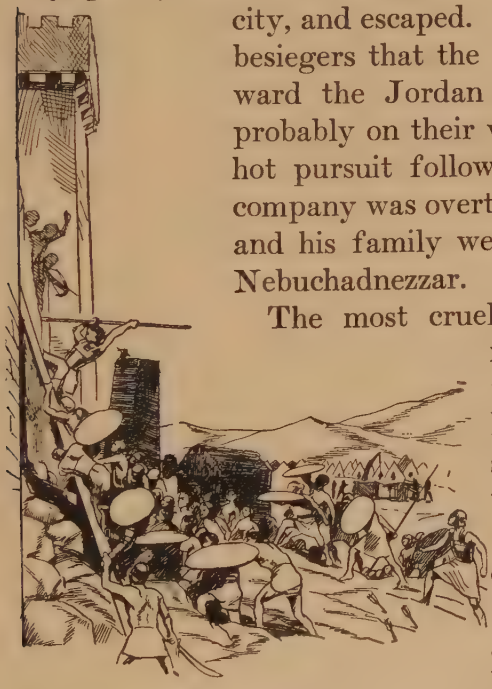
A general transference to Babylon followed. The king and his family, and court, seven thousand officers and leading soldiers, one thousand skilled workmen, the flower of the army, the best of the nobility, the wealth, the treasures of the capital, all were carried away.

Zedekiah, the twentieth, and last king, owed his kingship to Babylon. Egypt was still the charm to lure Judah on with fair promises. He made a secret alliance with Egypt, and rebelled against Babylon.

Nebuchadnezzar's patience was gone. He determined to put an end to the little rebel Judah. Again he came to Jerusalem and laid siege. The city

held out wonderfully, but at last the enemy made a breach in the strong wall. Nothing remained to prevent the enemy from entering.

Zedekiah and his little company saw that resistance was useless. Under cover of the darkness of night, they quietly made their way to the south side of the city, and escaped. Word came to the besiegers that the rebels had fled toward the Jordan valley, and were probably on their way to Egypt. A hot pursuit followed. The helpless company was overtaken, and the king and his family were brought before Nebuchadnezzar.



The most cruel punishment was meted out. In the presence of Zedekiah, his sons were slain, and having witnessed this awful sight, his own eyes were put out. He was then taken a captive to Babylon in chains of brass, where he passed his remaining days in prison.

In a month, the beautiful city of Jerusalem, the hope and pride of the Hebrew race, was reduced to ashes. The wall was broken down, the temple, the king's palace, all public and private buildings were burned, and everything of any value carried away to Babylon. The city was left a heap where foxes walk.

A most tragic story closes this last chapter of Judah. A little remnant of the once powerful nation was scattered here and there. They were the poorest of the class which Jeremiah had compared to a basket of bad figs. Their headquarters was to be Mizpah, and for governor was appointed Gedaliah, a grandson of the good scribe Shaphan of Josiah's time.

When the great Babylonian army had withdrawn with the last of Judah's pride, and Jerusalem lay a smoldering ruin, these few remaining ones ceased to look after their disappearing friends, and turned their sad faces toward their new capital, a few miles north of Jerusalem.

Gedaliah was a noble man, and for a short time things looked hopeful in Mizpah. The people came out from hiding places in Judah, and neighboring nations, and put themselves under this ruler. The country was divided among them, and the poor who had never expected to own a foot of land, found themselves with good-sized pieces of ground. The faithful prophet Jeremiah, who had cast his lot among those remaining, was the guiding spirit of the upright Gedaliah.

But old enemies were watching the hopeful colony with envy. The Ammonites who had rejoiced to assist in the awful destruction of Jerusalem, eyed with disfavor any return of good to Judah. The king of these people found a ready tool to work evil to Gedaliah in a miserable Jewish prince named Ishmael. The reward held out was no doubt the governorship.

Gedaliah was warned, but he refused to believe in

danger. Very soon, Ishmael came with a few associates to visit the governor. He was most hospitably received and made a welcome guest. In return, he was treacherous enough to turn on his unwary host, and his few unsuspecting attendants, and kill them. Their bodies were thrown into a deep ditch, which Asa had dug so long before when he was fortifying Mizpah.

To add to his crime, the wicked Ishmael invited into the fort a band of eighty pilgrims from Shiloh and Samaria who were passing on their way to Jerusalem. With every sign of sorrow they were going up to lament over the fallen city, and to sacrifice at the broken shrine.

Not suspecting evil, they entered to accept the far-famed hospitality of Gedaliah, as they supposed, but no sooner were they inside the gates, than Ishmael and his ten companions turned on the harmless pilgrims and killed them. Then they hurried away to the king of the Ammonites, taking with them the princesses, daughters of Zedekiah, who had been left with Gedaliah.

When the fearful massacre became known to the farmers around, a company started out in fierce pursuit. Near the pool of Gibeon, Ishmael was overtaken, and a fierce struggle followed. The murderers escaped, and nothing more was heard of them.

The few survivors were lost in dismay. If they remained, they feared that the vengeance of Babylon would fall on them for the death of the governor. Besides, might not Ishmael return with a strong force? In their confusion they decided to start to

Egypt where so many of their countrymen lived. When the little company disappeared in the wilderness to seek a new home in Egypt, Judah was indeed left desolate.

QUESTIONS

How did the crown prince Eliakim come to the throne with the name of Jehoiakim?

What became of Josiah's second son Jehoahaz?

What does the building of his palace reveal in the character of Jehoiakim?

What great battle took place?

How did Jerusalem take Egypt's defeat?

What did the prophet Jeremiah do?

Did King Jehoiakim like the prophecies?

What happened to the king?

What happened soon after Jehoiachin came to the throne?

Tell about the transference of Jerusalem to Babylon.

Did Egypt ever help the nations of Judah and Israel against enemies?

What was Zedekiah's sad fate?

CHAPTER XLIII

THE EXILE

ICTURE a large caravan of weak, dejected captives making their way through a hot, trackless desert, and you have the exiles of Judah led away into captivity.

Their recent sorrowful experiences had left them half dazed and dumb with despair. During eighteen months there had been no quiet nor rest in Jerusalem day or night. The enemy outside the walls had kept up a roar and tumult, hurling great stones against the walls with such force, that the terrific sounds re-echoed through the city. No one knew at what moment the walls would give way before the enemy's monster engines.

To this constant strain were added the sufferings of famine, when the wretched people had even turned cannibals.

At last, came the long-remembered day when the word went like wild-fire through the city that a break had been made in the walls. Close on this came the fierce soldiers, burning with hatred and vengeance for the long resistance.

Then they were carried captive to Babylon. It is likely that in some cases families were divided, some

going to one place, and others to another, and the future was so uncertain.

What a long, toilsome journey lay ahead of them before they would reach Babylon! It is certain that

JUDAH LED AWAY INTO CAPTIVITY.

many perished, as weakened as they were by famine and distress. But the fall of a few caused no check in the march, and only those most concerned took any particular note of their absence.

This does not mean that their captors were more than usually cruel. The Babylonians were lenient where they could be, but in war and exile, very little mercy can be shown.

When they reached their new home they found everything strange. Instead of the dear, familiar hills of Judah, with vineyards and small fields on the slopes, they saw the low, fertile levels along the Euphrates river, with monotonous canals dividing up the great stretches. The people were strange looking, their language was only a jargon, and all their ways were new.

When the exiles looked toward Babylon they did not see a temple like their own rising from a great elevation. Babylon, and the towns along the river were built on artificial mounds, and there were no precipices nor peaks.

Instead of one crowning temple overlooking the whole city, there were many temples for many gods, and idols were found on every hand. The Jews recognized some which they had struggled to worship while at home. Somehow they were not so pleasing now, and later they became positively odious to them.

The Hebrews grew homesick, and a deep yearning for their sacred temple, with its pure worship, sprang up in them. This longing grew, and found expression in poetry, some of which is given in the Psalms.

If the people from Jerusalem had not been so blinded with visions of their own Judah, they could have seen many advantages in Babylon. They were really well treated in their new country. The rulers

were kind, compared with many conquerors of that day, and the exiles were allowed to settle in peaceful colonies in the country of Babylon, in the capital and in the outside towns.

They took up different kinds of work, just as they had done at home. The farmers went into the country, the skilled mechanics were kept in the large cities to help the king in his great building enterprises, the soldiers joined the army, and the large number of day laborers went wherever they pleased. Nebuchadnezzar was a wonderful builder. When he took Babylon from Assyria, it was nothing but a ruin, but when he died, he left a city surpassing all other cities of ancient times in splendor and beauty.

Picture a city surrounded by heavy walls sixty miles in circumference. These solid walls were eighty-seven feet thick, and three hundred and fifty feet high. Two chariots, each with four horses, could safely pass on the top of those walls.

There were one hundred gates in those walls, opening from the city. These gates, twenty-five on each side, were of solid brass, and from them extended as many streets, each fifteen miles long. This strong wall, with its two hundred and fifty lofty towers, was a safe protection against the attacks of any enemy.

The river Euphrates, which ran through the city from north to south, was spanned by a bridge of such splendid architecture that it was the marvel of the world. Palaces and temples glistened and shone on every hand, and magnificent public buildings arose as by magic.

One marvelous work of Nebuchadnezzar was the

famous hanging gardens which he constructed to please his queen. For this stupendous undertaking he built up two mountains, four hundred feet high, one at each side. The gardens were made up of terraces, one towering above the other, until the highest were more than three hundred feet. To support these terraces, enormous piers were built, and the ascent, from terrace to terrace, was made by flights of stairs as broad as the terrace, and of great depth. These stairs were, themselves, smaller terraces close enough together to admit climbing. When completed and planted with every desirable tree, shrub, and plant, and the royal landscape gardeners had used their utmost skill, it is not surprising that these hanging gardens became one of the seven wonders of the world.

This was the city Nebuchadnezzar was building when the exiles came. The land was full of slaves, workmen of all kinds from many lands to carry on those extensive works, and the Hebrew captives did not make any noted addition to the myriads already there. They made their own places without attracting much unpleasant attention.

They found great opportunities in this new land. Besides the rich farm lands, the trade of Babylon gave the Jews their first lessons in money-making for which they have since become so noted.

The kings of the land became very proud of their handsome, capable captives, and, in some cases, gave them high positions. The stories of Daniel and Esther show that the children of this race sometimes sat by the side of monarchs.

There is a little story about Jehoiachin which be-

longs to this time. It is a delightful narrative compared with the many which tell of only hatred and bloodshed.

Two of Judah's kings who were taken to Babylon in captivity never returned to Jerusalem. The blind Zedekiah was one of them. The king kept him in a dungeon till he died, and then tried to make amends for his cruelty by giving him a magnificent funeral.

The boy-king, Jehoiachin was the other one. He had been carried away with the queen-mother, and the court, and was kept in a Babylonian prison during the lifetime of his captor, king Nebuchadnezzar.

When that monarch died, his son, who succeeded him, took a great interest in Jehoiachin. It may be that a friendship had sprung up between the crown-prince and the captive king years before, and that he had been waiting for the time of his power when he could bestow honors on his unfortunate friend.

Jehoiachin was set free and given the rank of prince. He sat at the table of the new ruler of Babylon, and became his close friend. It is probable that the captive-king was made governor of the Jews in Babylon.

Now and then letters and messages reached them from home, but they were not always comforting. The little company left in Judah were not meeting with success, and the land became more and more impoverished.

One day a letter came to the exiles which filled their hearts with joy. It was from Jeremiah, the prophet who had remained in desolate Judah. He had preferred to suffer with his country rather than

enjoy the ease and even honor offered him by the king of Babylon.

Jeremiah had the highest interests of the people at heart. It was with fatherly interest in their welfare that he urged the people to be loyal to the king of Babylon, and make use of the rare freedom given them by tilling the soil and building up family life.

A change came over Babylon. Nebuchadnezzar died and those who followed him could not rule with the same firm hand. Luxury, vice, and weakness came in rapid succession. Justice and kind dealings gave place to tyranny and cruelty. The complaints of the exiles grew louder, and their longing for Jerusalem was greater.

A strong power, Persia, took the lead. Finally the great city of Babylon was captured by Cyrus by turning the water of the river Euphrates into an immense basin which had been made for that purpose when the splendid bridge was built.

The king and princes of Babylon were feasting at a famous banquet and were taken by surprise. The first hint they had was a startling one,—the Persian army had entered by the dry river channel, and had possession of the city.

But the Hebrews were not surprised; their prophets had been holding out the hope that a deliverer was coming, and they had watched the progress of Cyrus with joy. The promises of Ezekiel, Jeremiah and Isaiah were wonderfully like the outcome.

These promises were full of comfort to the exiles who hardly dared hope that any good would come to them again.

"Say unto the cities of Judah, Behold your God!" said Isaiah, and the promises followed.

"He will feed his flock like a shepherd, he will gather the lambs in his arm, and carry them in his bosom, and will gently lead those that have their young."

In these prophecies the fall of Babylon is clearly foretold, and Cyrus is named as the great deliverer.

Another chapter of Hebrew history had closed, and a more hopeful time for the whole world was opening.

QUESTIONS

What was the condition of the captives led away to Babylon?

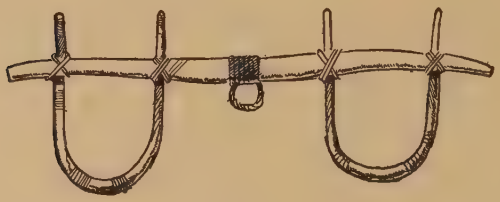
Describe the new country to which they were taken.

How was the city of Babylon fortified?

What did Nebuchadnezzar do to please his queen?

Were the successors of Nebuchadnezzar his equals?

How did the Jews feel under increasing tyranny?



CHAPTER XLIV

DANIEL, A STORY OF BABYLON

OUBT and despair had again settled over the city of David. Jehoiakim, who had dared to set himself up against the authority of Nebuchadnezzar, had been put into chains to be taken to Babylon. The great conqueror finally changed his mind and put the feeble king back on the throne of Judah. But he did not go away empty-handed.

Nebuchadnezzar coveted all that was fair and desirable and that would add to the beauty of his kingdom. His eyes were open to beauty of every kind. When he conquered Jerusalem he was attracted by certain young boys of unusual comeliness, and he thought how the presence of such handsome youths as these were sure to become, would grace his court in Babylon. These boys we know later by the names of Daniel, Shadrach, Meshach, and Abed-nego. They were carried to Babylon and all became distinguished, but it is in Daniel that we are especially interested. It is said that his family was a leading one, even princely, but that did not give them the power to keep him, as long as the conqueror found him desirable.

The boys were about twelve years of age when they

first appeared in Babylon among the king's favorites. They had been placed under royal tutors to be fitted for court life. They were to be trained for splendid appearance and bearing, and at the same time the mind was to be developed and stored with the wisdom of Chaldea.

Daniel and his Hebrew companions were vegetarians, it seems, or they adopted this diet in order to avoid the polluted meat of the Babylonians. Their meals were brought to them from the king's table, and we may be sure they were offered the choicest of relishes. The steward who had them under his care was ambitious that his charges should be handsome and healthy, and he urged them to partake of the king's generosity.

But Daniel and his companions would not eat the king's dainties nor drink his wine, and they requested the steward to keep those luxuries himself, and bring them simply water and pulse, a common term for vegetables.

The steward hesitated. If he did this, and the youths should grow thin, the king's displeasure would fall on him.

"Try us ten days," said Daniel, "and give us only pulse to eat and water to drink. At the end of that time, compare us with those who eat the king's dainties and drink his wine, and judge for yourself."

The steward yielded, for he liked to please this Jewish boy who attracted everyone. Besides, he was not unwilling to reserve for himself the rich food and choice wine. When the comparison was made, it was found that they had gained, and surpassed all others

in vigor and beauty. After that the peculiar boys were given their simple fare, and the steward lived sumptuously.

Their period of training was three years, and at the end of that time, they were brought in before the king, with many other youths.

Nebuchadnezzar was greatly pleased with the appearance of the Hebrew youths, and after he had questioned them closely on the learning of his country, he found that they knew ten times more than the wisest magicians of his realm. After this their places were among the wise men.

At this time the king dreamed a wonderful dream, but he was so unfortunate as to be unable to remember it. He called in the old magicians who had been most successful in their profession.

"Tell me the dream and its meaning," he commanded.

The magicians were in despair. The king became furious in his anger, and commanded that all the wise men of Babylon be killed. The decree went out, and the captain of the king's guard who went to see that the king's law was carried out, came to Daniel and his companions to bring them in for the general massacre.

Daniel was taken by surprise, but he was not overcome with fear. Calmly, he asked the captain why the king was in such a hurry. Then he sought the king's presence himself, and asked that he be given a little time, and promised that the king should be given his dream and its meaning.

It is very likely that by this time the impetuous king was glad of an excuse to postpone the fearful

execution of all his wise men, and Daniel's request was willingly granted.

Daniel went before his God and on his knees asked that the dream and its interpretation might be shown him. When the dream came to him in the night, Daniel went before his God to thank Him.

It was a wonderful dream, and when the king heard it, he was proud to have dreamed what was so full of meaning. He looked on Daniel as a god, and fell on his face before him and worshiped him, and commanded that an offering of sweet odors should be made to him as to a god.

When all this was declined, he made Daniel governor of all Babylon, and chief of all his wise men. Like a generous man, Daniel asked that the king appoint his Hebrew friends over the affairs of the province of Babylon.

Later Nebuchadnezzar had another dream. This time he could readily recall it, and he knew whom to call in, after the magicians had failed to interpret it.

Daniel stood dumb and confused before the king. What really distressed Daniel was that he saw in the dream coming disaster to the king.

"My lord," he said, "the dream be to them that hate thee." Then he proceeded to show the king how punishment was to come upon him.

Nebuchadnezzar was the leading monarch of the world, and Babylon was the admiration of every beholder. When he saw all the marvels of his city, his beautiful palaces, and all the wonders and power of his realm, he grew in pride and tyranny.

About a year after his dream, he was walking

one day on the highest terraces of the hanging gardens, and as he looked around him, he said to himself:

"Is not this great Babylon, which I built for the royal dwelling-place, by the might of my power and for the glory of my majesty?"

While the words were yet on his lips, a voice came to him denouncing his life and pride, and telling his fate.

The same hour his punishment came. "He was driven from men, and did eat grass as oxen, and his body was wet with the dew of heaven till his hair was grown like eagles' feathers, and his nails like birds' claws."

After the punishment had humbled him, he was restored to his reason, and his kingdom.

The next view we have of Daniel is at the time of the great feast of Belshazzar, a later king of Babylon.

This king was haughty as Nebuchadnezzar had been. At this great banquet, when he was heated with wine, he sent to have the golden drinking vessels brought in, which had belonged to the temple in Jerusalem, and which Nebuchadnezzar had carried away, and placed in his temple at Babylon.

In the course of this drunken revelry, the king, happening to look up, saw a man's hand writing high on the wall, where the light of many candles fell on it.

We do not wonder that the king was startled. "The joints of his loins were loosed, and his knees smote one against another."

In his distress he cried aloud for his enchanters and wise men to come and read the strange characters, and show him the meaning of them.

"Whosoever shall read this writing, and show me the interpretation thereof, shall be clothed with purple, and have a chain of gold about his neck, and shall be the third ruler in the kingdom," was the splendid promise of the king.

BELSHAZZAR'S BANQUET.

The wise men all hurried in, but they stood helpless before the mysterious writing.

Finally Daniel was brought, and he stood in the

presence of Belshazzar. The king told him all the good things he had heard about him, and the reward he would receive if he could unfold the mystery.

Daniel made it clear to the king that he was not working for rewards, but he promised to read the writing.

His courage was something heroic. In the presence of that royal company he reviewed the glory and sin of Nebuchadnezzar, and the punishment which had come upon him. Then he brought his accusations to bear on Belshazzar, and showed him how he, too, had become guilty of the same sins.

The king might have ordered his guard to slay this insolent accuser, but instead he sat overwhelmed with fear, as Daniel turned to the mysterious handwriting.

It was an impressive moment. The splendid figure of Daniel with his arm outstretched and hand extended towards the writing on the wall, held the riotous company in solemn awe. His words fell slowly, and distinctly, on the ears of the terror-stricken king and royal banqueters.

"MENE, MENE, TEKEL, UPHARSIN!" "God hath numbered thy kingdom and brought it to an end. Thou are weighed in the balance and found wanting. Thy kingdom is divided, and given to the Medes and Persians."

The king had felt secure within the high massive walls of Babylon, with strong guards near the solid brass gates. The army of Cyrus of Persia might hammer away to its heart's content, but he could sit in his banquet hall and defy them to enter. He did not think of the river Euphrates, which could be emptied

by turning the water into an immense dry lake, not far away.

Cyrus did this, and caught the king feasting. That night Belshazzar was slain, and the empire became the Persians'.

Under the Persians, Daniel continued in high favor and the king made him one of the three presidents of his whole kingdom, and was considering setting him over the whole realm.

This awoke the jealousy of the other leading men, and they tried to find some fault with Daniel as a ruler. When it appeared that this was impossible, they laid a deep plot to bring him under the king's displeasure in another way.

The one hundred and twenty satraps, and the other two presidents came before the king, and asked permission to have a royal law made that if any person should make any petition to any god or man except the king for thirty days, he should be cast into the lions' den.

This tickled the vanity of the king and he sent out the command, signed with his seal, after which it became one of the laws of the Medes and Persians, not to be recalled nor changed.

As soon as Daniel heard about this, he went into his house with its windows toward Jerusalem, and in full sight of the outside world, he knelt three times a day and prayed to his God and offered thanksgiving, as he had been doing.

His enemies were watching, and soon reported the fact to the king, at the same time reminding him of the law which could not be changed.

The king was sad, and tried hard to save his favorite. When this was impossible, he had him cast into the lion's den, but at the same time, he encouraged Daniel to believe that his God would save him.

The king passed a sleepless night, and at break of day, he hastened to the lion's den.

"Daniel, O Daniel, servant of the living God, is thy God, whom thou servest continually, able to deliver thee from the lions?" asked the king in a loud voice.

From the depths of the den came the glad answer, "O king, live forever. My God hath sent his angel, and hath shut the lions' mouth and they have not hurt me."

The king rejoiced that his favorite had been saved, and he received him gladly. But he worked out his spite on Daniel's enemies by having them put to death. Then he sent out a decree that all the people of his kingdom should tremble before the God of Daniel, the living and steadfast God.

Daniel was old when Cyrus took Babylon, and it appears that he soon dropped out of the life of the court. But a great joy filled his last days. His countrymen were making ready to return, and the temple was to be rebuilt in the city of David.

Daniel was too old to think of returning himself, but he became very active in helping others to do so. His venerable figure in the Jewish colonies must have been a common sight, as he worked with his people, encouraging them to be loyal to their country and their religion.

All kinds of traditions are connected with this re-

markable man. Some have it that he came to Jerusalem and died there. This is not likely. He probably died in the land of captivity, where king and people gave him a magnificent burial.

QUESTIONS

What Jewish boys did Nebuchadnezzar take to Babylon?

Which one of them became famous?

Did the Jews differ from the Babylonians in their diet?

What did Daniel do which brought him honors from the king?

What peculiar malady fell upon Nebuchadnezzar?

Can you describe the incident of the handwriting on the wall?

How did the enemies of Daniel think to get rid of him?

Were they successful?

CHAPTER XLV

VISIONS

ROM the beginning of their history, the Hebrew people were taught by means of object-lessons. They were led to worship by the use of much ceremony. Their faith was expressed by priests in peculiar robes, by the exquisite hangings of the temple, the precious treasures and the costly ornaments, by the smoking altars, by the Holy of Holies where the sacred ark was kept, and by the great feast-days. Some of these may seem unnecessary to us, but this was their way of expressing that God should have the purest and choicest of their lives, and by these means they could approach Him, but without them they knew not how to pray.

The exile took them among strangers in a foreign land. Dazed and despairing, they sank down among these strange surroundings. No one cared for them, nor held out a helping hand to them where they sat in confusion. They could do very little to help each other, and what did that vast, moving throng around them, so busy with their own affairs, care for these few new-comers? At the most, looks of scorn or ridicule were bestowed on them when they showed by their manner how strange everything was.

But one cannot sit long in despair. They began to look around and take note, and all the time they were learning to think.

They came to see that if they had been wise, and had rejoiced that they were God's own people, all these painful experiences would have been spared them. From the kindergarten and elementary schools, they would have gone up gradually into higher training, where the glad knowledge would have come to them that God is a spirit, and can be approached without so much ceremony. It was their sins that made necessary such experiences.

The first impulse of the captives in Babylon was to cling together, just as we never have a warmer feeling for our countrymen than when we meet them in a foreign land. The Hebrew captives all became close kinsmen in this strange land. They lived in colonies, and learned that not foreigners, but their own people, were their best friends.

Patriotism such as they had never felt in Judah was the result. Together these people would talk about their little desolate country, until it grew into something splendid in their imaginations.

If they had come to Babylon on a short visit, it would have been different. They might have blushed for little Judah, when compared with this imposing realm. But now that their capital was lying in ruins, and the whole land was desolate, it was like dwelling on the virtues of departed loved ones.

The terrible home-sickness which took possession of them at times could only be expressed by their poets:

"By the rivers of Babylon,
There we sat down, yea, we wept
When we remembered Zion.
Upon the willows in the midst thereof
We hanged up our harps."

It was a said experience, but it was good for them. Their hearts became tender as their minds grew clearer.

The overwhelming longing for their sanctuary! They learned to pray and praise without it, but no sacrifices could be offered, and as for their great religious feast-days, they were out of the question.

They were like young men and women who sometimes rush away from the home of their parents because they cannot appreciate simple wholesomeness. But the glamour of city life is soon gone, and then they see how foolish and blind they have been. These people saw their folly in turning from their own God with the temple where they could commune with Him to the low idol-worship of the great world outside.

Into this dark despair, came a faint light. The prophets had given vague promises of a return to Jerusalem, but there was no comfort in anything so far away. The prophets were always telling the people something they could not understand nor appreciate.

But now they were beginning to understand what was meant. As time went by, the prophets became clearer in their utterances and the promises they held out. The people had learned the lesson of the exile, and the end of the captivity was approaching.

There was expectation in the air. The kings of Babylon had grown in tryanny, and the oppression was hard to bear. But the captives, led by their prophets, saw a new hope rising.

EZEKIEL'S VISION OF A NEW JERUSALEM.

Their eyes were riveted on Cyrus the Great, and they watched with joy his triumphant course. It did not require a prophet's eyes to see how he was drawing

nearer and nearer to Babylon, and to foresee the outcome.

All the while the people were beginning to see visions with the prophets. The whole past lay mapped out before them. Their mission in the world grew in importance as they saw plainly the difference between themselves and other nations. Their past was black enough and full of mistakes, but out of it the future began to take on shape and meaning.

The prophets were heard with more faith, as their visions became clearer. Not only were promises given of a coming return, but pictures were added to stimulate the imagination.

Ezekiel beheld the new Jerusalem, where lay the ruins of the old, and crowning the mount was the new temple shimmering in a light from above.

QUESTIONS

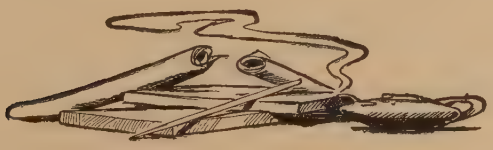
How did the Jews learn to worship God?

What did the exile teach them?

Was this union and patriotism necessary to develop a strong nation?

As to the effect on religion, did the exile have any notable effect?

Whom were they expecting to deliver them from Babylonian slavery?



CHAPTER XLVI

THE HOME-COMING

ERUBBABEL is a heavy-sounding name to us with nothing to charm our fancy, but not so to the exiles in Babylon. It was the name of the prince of Judah who was to lead them back to Jerusalem.

Babylon had fallen, and Cyrus of Persia became the great monarch. Hebrew prophets had foretold this event when their captivity would be ended, and the children of Judah, scattered throughout Babylon, would be called together and sent on their journey home to Jerusalem.

It is said that Cyrus was no stranger to Hebrew prophecy, and that it pleased him to be called the nation's deliverer. At any rate, he soon set about to earn the distinction.

The decree was published throughout all the Jewish colonies that the king would grant liberty, and freedom from tribute, to all who would return to Judah. He had already appointed a leader, and granted them a strong guard for protection on the way.

More than half a century before this time, Jehoiachin, the eighteen-year-old king of Judah, was taken captive and carried away to Babylon. Zerubbabel,

the leader appointed by Cyrus, was a grandson of this captive king. He was thus a connecting link between the two periods.

The Jews did not all hail with joy this promise to return. The land of captivity had become their home. Those who came from Jerusalem were nearly all dead, and their children were content as they were.

The native country of song and story, and of vague rumors, did not appeal to them. In the sad lamentations which their parents had chanted, they learned that it was desolate, only a wilderness of ruined cities. The splendors of Babylon and Chaldea were much more to their liking. Only those who loved country and religion better than ease and security, made preparations for the uncertain journey.

The rebuilding of the temple was the great magnet which drew them back to their native land. Cyrus made clear in his message that it was for this purpose that he would have them return, and the Jew knew not how to worship without a temple.

All the Jews were asked to help. The heads of the families and the priests visited all the Jewish colonies, and received the freewill offerings. There were "vessels of silver, with gold, with goods, and with beasts, and with precious things."

A most touching scene took place at this time. The splendid vessels of gold and silver which Nebuchadnezzar had taken from the temple at Jerusalem, and carried to Babylon to be placed in the temples of his gods, were given back to the Jews by Cyrus. He had his treasurer bring them out of the heathen temple, and give them into the keeping of Zerubbabel, prince

of Judah. It was a ceremony of form, as the vessels were all numbered. There were no less than five thousand, four hundred vessels of gold and silver.

What memories would the sight of those sacred objects bring up to the devout old Jews! They were all that was left of the holy temple. With them was associated the long wearisome journey into captivity in a strange country. But how few of those who came out with those treasures would be returning with them to the vine-covered ruins of the temple.

The Jews made their preparations with system. A census was taken of those who volunteered to return, and each one had to be strictly identified in the family register. Those who could not thus show their names were regarded with suspicion. It was the desire to have only true Jews in this company.

When the census was complete, it was found that forty-two thousand, three hundred and sixty stood ready to go on this dangerous journey. Besides these there were seven thousand, three hundred and thirty-seven servants.

When the caravan started out, the attention of all Babylon was arrested. We feel sure that there was fear among the Jews who left, and those who remained, and it would be interesting to know how many, who departed, left a way open for a return, if they so desired.

Those who had passed over this route years before, must have seen landmarks all along the way, which revived old memories. There, a relative or friend had been buried, perhaps. Farther along, they had rested on the journey where a bubbling spring made a green

spot in the great desert. On those high hills, just above the horizon, an army of desert robbers had been seen watching them, but they had been fearful to attack them on account of the strength of the Jews.

Such memories would come to those who had been young in those days, and perhaps they had wondered then why their elders were so downcast. It had been rather a novelty to them to be taken to famous Babylon, about which they had heard such wonderful tales. Now they had lived their lives in Babylon, and their only wish was to see Jerusalem, the city of their fathers, before they died.

When they came to Judah, how they must have strained their eyes to catch the first sight of their native land and of Jerusalem. No matter where they belonged in Judah, the high-seat of all interest was this city.

Matters were not as they expected them to be. They knew exactly where their family possessions lay, but they did not find them waiting for their occupancy. Some of them were held by the Jews who had been left, and had survived all disasters, and others had been taken by their old unfriendly neighbors. Only the most worthless land had been left.

The Jews could show their old titles, but what did those half-barbarians care for old Hebrew titles. Of far greater weight, though, was the authority of Cyrus. They were all vassals of his, and he had sent those Jews back to take possession of their fathers' estates.

The confusion was great. Some of those who had taken possession without a right, left for their own

country, while in other cases, the young men who had come in large numbers, were glad to settle their claims by marrying the daughters of the families so well established. This led to greater trouble in later times.

LANDSCAPE IN JUDAH.

The land was a picture of desolation, for the ground had been only half-tilled. The vineyards, formerly well-kept, were trailing around in confusion, many of

the springs were choked up with weeds and debris washed down in freshets. Everything spoke of decay, and years of neglect.

It was a tremendous work that those order-loving Jews found awaiting them after they had secured their old estates, and discouragment spread from town to town. Their number was so small, and the work was so large.

To add to their distress, a period of drouth followed, and want became common. Like the Israelites of old who thought with regret of the flesh-pots in Egypt, these must have remembered the abundance and luxury of rich Babylon. The wonder is that they did not all start out on a return to the land of their captivity.

QUESTIONS

Who was the great deliverer of the Jews in Babylon?

Who was the leader of the return?

Did all the Jews return?

What preparations were made?

CHAPTER XLVII

TEMPLE BUILDERS

ISING to a great height above the city of Jerusalem was the Temple Mount. After the fall of Jerusalem it was a picture of desolation, and the Jews who had returned from Babylon were pained every time they turned their eyes in its direction.

It was easy enough for those far away in Babylon, and Egypt, to pray with their faces turned toward Jerusalem. Their minds were full of beautiful visions of the magnificent past. But it was quite another thing to lift up hearts of faith and hope, when they were face to face with the ruin.

The edict of Cyrus kept ringing in their ears. They had left Babylon, with all its security and comforts, to build up the temple of God, yet here they had been over a year, without doing anything except to build up the altar amid the ruins.

It is hard for us to understand what the temple meant to the Hebrew race. Their regard for it amounted to a ruling passion. No matter where they were, and under what circumstances, it was the chief center of interest. The great sorrow of the exile was not that they were oppressed in the land of captivity,

but that they were distant from the sacred spot where their temple lay in ruins.

These people could not build temples as we build churches. As much as they missed the temple while in Babylon, it never occurred to them that they could build one there. In all the wide world there was only one location, and that in Jerusalem, where their temple could stand.

In the second year after their home-coming, they entered upon the work. They were not lacking in means. The rich offerings of their countrymen in Babylon, and the temple treasures which Cyrus had delivered over to them, had been placed in the king's treasure-house in a neighboring country for safe keeping. They had the power to call on the workmen of the Persian king to bring cedars from Lebanon, and other material. Besides, there were the liberal free-will contributions made by the Jews themselves, when they first saw the ruins of Solomon's temple after their return.

The old foundation, as solid and massive as it had been, was not fit to build a new structure on, and the ruins had to be cleared away to the bottom. After they had removed the vines and shrubs growing in a tangle over the crumbling walls, and had dug out large forest trees reaching out their wide branches over court and porch, there was all the crumbling masonry to carry away. A great many of the heavy stones, which had been hewn in quarries far away in the time of David and Solomon, were undoubtedly worked over for the new temple.

The new foundation was begun amid great rejoic-

ing. The workmen proceeded to the sound of music and praise. When the builders laid the stones, the priests with their trumpets, and the Levites with cymbals, praised God.

The singing was responsive. "Give thanks unto Jehovah, for he is good, for his lovingkindness endureth forever toward Israel," was sounded back and forth across the temple-site.

This work was no heavy, unwelcome task, but a labor of love. The workmen were inspired as well as the many young, and old, and decrepit, who could only stand around on the Temple Mount, and cheer the laborers. It is safe to say that an ever-increasing number came to rejoice, as stone upon stone was put in place.

When the foundation was completed, the people raised a great shout of joy. The temple at last was rising from the ruins.

But there were others who did not shout for joy. They were the old men with stooped figure, and long white hair and beard, who were always honored and revered by the younger Jews. They had seen the temple of Solomon in its majesty and matchless beauty, and the difference filled them with sorrow. While others were shouting for joy, they wept with a loud voice, so that the voice of gladness and of grief was heard at a great distance.

Josephus, the great Jewish historian, tells us that the noise of trumpets, and cymbals, of singing and weeping was heard in the land of Israel where lived the Samaritans.

This seems absurd to us, until we learn that the

land of the Jews extended only four or five miles north of Jerusalem at this time. These outsiders hurried to Jerusalem, full of curiosity to see what was taking place.

When they saw that a temple was being built where so long had lain the ruins of the old one, they asked to be allowed to assist.

These people, known in the New Testament as Samaritans, were made up of different classes. When the Ten Tribes had been carried away so long before by the Assyrians, the conquerors had brought in foreign tribes to take their place. Other foreigners had come in at different times, and besides, there were a few left of the ten tribes. The descendants of all these were called the Samaritans. They claimed to be worshipers of God, and they were, when everything was favorable to that worship. Now when they heard that a great temple was being built, and that Cyrus the Great was in sympathy with the undertaking, they became very anxious to have a part in it.

The Jews had no faith in this people, and their leader, Zerubbabel, gave a blunt refusal. He told them that this was a work for the Jews only, and that they had nothing whatever to do with it. The Samaritans departed with angry looks.

The imprudence of such a manner was soon seen. Enmity was stirred up, and those neighbors became a great hindrance to the success of the work. They became so hostile, that one of the prophets says "that there was no safety to him that went out or came in because of the adversary."

Discouragement followed the laying of the founda-

tion. Crops failed in drouths, or were destroyed by mildew, and beaten down by hail. There were no improvements made, and so "no hire for man, nor any hire for beast." And all the time their enemies were vexing them.

SAMARITANS BEING REFUSED, DEPART WITH THREATS.

Zeal for temple-building was at a low ebb, and finally, the people concluded that they had been mistaken, and that "the time had not yet come for the house of the Lord to be built."

The new Persian king had been influenced by the false reports of the enemy, and he issued an order that

the work should be stopped, and the people dropped back discouraged. The Phoenician workmen had long before been dismissed, and the cedar-trees from Lebanon lay idly waiting for better days.

Time went by, until sixteen years had passed, since Cyrus had electrified the Jews of Babylon with his great edict, but nothing had been done towards building the temple except the foundation.

Prophets became active. They pointed to the Lord's house lying in ruins, while the people lived in comfortable homes.

These temple builders needed encouragement. The prophet Haggai came to them with splendid visions of the new temple, which to them seemed so commonplace and insignificant. It was to surpass the old one in glory, he said. The most patriotic period of Jewish history was yet to come, and this temple was to be the centre of interest and inspiration.

The builders were working with new hope, when another difficulty arose. Tattenai, the Persian governor, came to visit Jerusalem, and he was surprised to find the people working on a great temple.

It appeared such a stronghold on that high hill, that it might just as easily become a citadel or fortress. He was not sure that the people had any right to build anything which looked so threatening, and he asked by whose authority they were doing it.

When the Jewish leaders informed him that Cyrus the Great had given them permission, he dared not do anything to hinder the work, but as a faithful officer, he felt that he must report the matter to the present king, Darius II.

The Persian king at once set to work to find this edict of Cyrus, about which his governor had written, when he told about the temple building.

Finally, the edict was found in Ecbatana. There, in emphatic terms, appeared the wishes of Cyrus that the Jews be allowed to return to Jerusalem, for the purpose of building up the temple.

Darius had the greatest regard for the wishes of Cyrus, and he sent a reply to his governor, not only to let them go on with the work, but even to give them all the aid they needed. The grave danger which had threatened them really turned out to be a decided gain.

The people worked on with increased zeal, and in four and a half years, the temple was ready for dedication.

Never was any temple, or church, dedicated with greater joy and gratitude.

A history of the temples would be a history of the Jewish people. All changes in the nation were reflected in their place of worship. When God-fearing kings ruled, and they were strong as well as good, the prosperity of the nation was seen in the temple in full repair, with the treasures all restored, and the coffers full of wealth. The great feast-days were observed in a splendid way, and daily services were held. The priests were zealous and faithful, and the people were ready to worship with reverence.

When the weak and idolatrous kings followed, at once there was a change. The great feast-days had less interest to the people, the treasures were used for other purposes, the high-places became more

popular, the temple began to look neglected, the faithful priests were kept in the background, and sometimes idols were set up in the temple, and under one king, at least, who did not use the temple for idols, the doors were nailed up and the public ceased to worship there. Then some great disaster to the nation would follow, and the temple would be robbed of its wealth to pay a war-debt, while the nation as a vassal became weaker and weaker.

This had been the history of the old temple, and the new one was to have experiences of a similar kind. But no more were rulers of the house of David to sacrifice to idols.

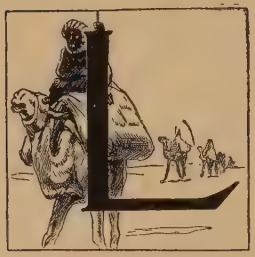
This temple stood five hundred years, until the time when Herod the Great replaced it with one of greater magnificence. Solomon's had withstood the many attacks of enemies, almost as long. The temple built by Herod the Great was forty years in building, and it had been completed but a few years, when it was razed to the ground by the Roman general, Titus.

QUESTIONS

How did the Jews regard the temple?
When did they begin the second temple?
Where did those poor people obtain the means?
Tell about the laying of the new foundation?
What trouble did they have with the Samaritans?
Why did they suspend work with the foundation?
Who encouraged them to go on with the building of the temple?
What is the history of the Jewish temples?

CHAPTER XLVIII

THE CUP-BEARER AND THE SCRIBE



ONG after the temple had been rebuilt, much remained to be done in Jerusalem. The city was yet an empty ruin with crumbling walls and fallen gates. In Babylon there was, at this time, a young Jewish prince who was deeply affected by stories which came, now and then, from the poor Jews in and around Jerusalem. In his high position as the king's cup-bearer, he might have congratulated himself that he was not one of them, and gone on living his princely life, but he was made of nobler stuff. He took to prayer and fasting for his poor kinsmen in Judah. It came to him that the right thing to do would be to ask help from the king. But he was too wise to rush into the presence of an eastern monarch with his troubles without being invited.

Three months passed before the opportunity came. Then one day the Persian king noticed that his cup-bearer looked sad, and he asked the cause.

The young Hebrew, Nehemiah, made good use of his time. In the most impressive way he showed the king the sorrowful condition of his country, and of "the city of his fathers' sepulchers."

The kind-hearted king was moved to sympathy. He arranged for Nehemiah to go to Jerusalem to rebuild the city. He gave him letters of introduction to the kings and officers along the way, and around Judah. These letters made known that it was the king's wish that Jerusalem should be rebuilt. He also sent orders to the keeper of the royal forest to supply the necessary timber for the work.

In a short time Nehemiah was ready to start out with a strong body-guard given him by the king, and with quite a number of his kinsmen.

It was an occasion to be remembered by the Jews in Babylon. That a young man standing so high in the favor of the Persian king should risk everything to help his unknown countrymen, and to build up a city which he had never seen, was enough to warm the heart of the most indifferent Jew.

By this time the main lines of travel were no longer narrow trails through the wilderness, or through a trackless desert. Road-building had become a part of the work of the mighty kings of Persia, and it is supposed that Nehemiah could make the journey from Babylon to Jerusalem in a month.

When he and his company reached Jerusalem, there was no one in the crumbling watch-towers to make known their approach. There were very few people living in the city, but we imagine that as soon as the word got out into the country places and towns around, everyone hurried up to Jerusalem to welcome the newcomers. Without doubt, there were many messages and presents from the wealthier kinsmen in Babylon, and there was much rejoicing.

What Nehemiah himself felt when he entered the land of his fathers, is an interesting question. With the splendid stories in mind on which his young imagination had fed, the real thing must have seemed small and barren. If he had been a commonplace man he would have turned from all in discouragement, and gone back to Babylon.

Before he reached Jerusalem he had met with opposition. When he presented his letters to the governors, and they saw the captains of the army and the horsemen, two envious leaders, named Sanballat and Tobiah, were much concerned that anything good should appear for the Jews.

Nehemiah was a man both shrewd and courageous. Perhaps he had foreseen some of the difficulties before he left Babylon, and for this reason, he had been so careful to arm himself with authority from the king. At any rate, it was his policy to do at once, what he had come to do.

He had been in Jerusalem three days, meeting the people and hearing tales of discouragement. In the silence of the night, when not even a night watch was awake, Nehemiah stole out quietly, and procuring a mule, he proceeded to ride around the walls of the city.

He tells us himself how he started out by the valley-gate, and rode as far as the king's pool. At that point he found the path blockaded with loose dirt and stones, so that not even a mule could cross. He proceeded on foot till he had satisfied himself as to the extent of the ruin, after which he returned as secretly. He tells, with evident delight, that he had consulted no one be-

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NEHEMIAH ON THE WALL

before starting, and that no one knew about his nocturnal ride.

This act was characteristic of the leader, and his next move was equally so. Calling together the chief men, he laid the matter before them.

"Ye see the evil case that we are in, how Jerusalem lieth waste, and the gates thereof are burned with fire; come, let us build up the wall of Jerusalem, that we be no more a reproach."

He then made known to them how this work had been laid upon him by God, and how the king had encouraged him.

They felt the inspiration of a strong leader. "Let us rise up and build," they said as one man.

When the evil-minded Sanballat and Tobiah heard of the undertaking, they tried to stop it with a laugh of scorn.

"What is this thing that ye do? Will ye rebel against the king?" they asked with contempt.

But Nehemiah cared little for their miserable threat. He replied as boldly:

"The God of heaven, he will prosper us; therefore we his servants will rise and build; but ye have no portion, nor right, nor memorial in Jerusalem."

The people, led by Nehemiah, plunged into the work of repairing the walls. Not a day must be lost. But in what seemed to be great haste, he kept a cool head. He wisely portioned out the work among the families, and everything went steadily on. Before the enemy could think of a plan to report the affair to the king, the walls were repaired, the doors set up, and the bolts and bars put in place.

There was much running back and forth among the neighboring tribes and communities. Sanballat, Tobiah, the Arabians, the Ammonites, and the Ashdodites quickly formed a conspiracy to attack Jerusalem. That would end the work of building up the walls, for how could men fight and build at the same time?

The plot reached the ears of Nehemiah, and he was determined to show them how men could both fight and work.

The Jews were alarmed. Their friends in the smaller towns who had learned about the conspiracy, sent in warnings and advised them to stop the work and be submissive, as they had been for so long a time.

But Nehemiah's courage was equal to the task. Where the walls were lowest, there he placed men armed with swords, spears and bows, and behind each warrior were his wife and children. Surely, there never was a more clever plan thought of to make a man fight and work his best.

This God-fearing leader appealed to the higher nature of the people, and reminded them to have faith in the Lord.

"Be ye not afraid of them," he said. "Remember the Lord who is great and terrible, and fight for your brethren, your sons, and your daughters, your wives, and your houses."

He armed his workmen. "Everyone with one of his hands wrought in the work, and with the other held his weapon." The builders had their swords girded by their sides. This gave rise to the common saying, "Sword and trowel." A trumpeter, too, was

placed on duty, so that in case of an attack, the widely separated workmen would hear the trumpet sound, and rush to the help of the attacked.

In this way they worked from early dawn till the stars appeared at night. Day and night they kept watch. When one person was exhausted, another stood ready to fill his place. Nehemiah shared in the common hardships. Neither he, nor his servants, nor the men of the guard, "put off their clothes" to rest at night.

Sanballat and his confederates tried another scheme. They sent a message to Nehemiah, proposing that he meet with them in a village of Samaria to talk matters over in confidence. This plot to get him into their power he saw through at once, and he sent them the answer that he had more important affairs at home.

Their next move was to send him a letter showing that he was plotting against Persia. The hidden threat was that this would be made known to Persia, but they added that they would like to meet him to form a conspiracy against Persia.

When Nehemiah refused to be caught in this trap, they laid a plan with still more cunning. One of the prophets of Jerusalem came to Nehemiah as a friend to tell him of a plot laid to kill him, and he advised him to hide himself in the temple.

Fear will make men do the most foolish things. If Nehemiah had not been so clear-headed and upright, he would have hurried in confusion into the temple, and thus ruined himself and his cause. The reply this brave man made to this seemingly kind adviser was, "Should such a man as I flee?" Besides, he

asked, how could he, a layman, enter the temple where only priests were entitled to go? He wound up with an emphatic, "I will not go in." It was afterwards known that this prophet had been hired by Nehemiah's enemies.

From other sources than the Bible, we learn that the enemies of Nehemiah finally succeeded in making known to the Persian king, what the rebels were doing in Jerusalem. After the fortifications were completed, these Jews would refuse to pay tribute, and would proclaim themselves independent of Persia. They urged the Persian king to stop the work before it could be finished.

The king's suspicions were aroused, and he was angry. But the decree he sent out to stop the work came too late. The wall was completed in fifty-two days, and the doors and gates hung. The decree did not say to tear it down, and the enemies were helpless.

The re-dedication of those walls was a festive occasion. Nehemiah brought all the people to the valley-gate, which was the point farthest from the temple. Then he divided them into two companies to march along the walls in opposite directions. The meeting place in this joyful march was in front of the temple, and there the songs of thanksgiving were united, with accompanying sound of cymbals, harps and trumpets. "Then they offered great sacrifices that day, and rejoiced; and the women also, and the children rejoiced, so that the joy of Jerusalem was heard even far off."

Nehemiah had yet much to do for Jerusalem. The walls enclosed much space, but few lived inside them.

He formed a plan that, by lot, a certain number should take up their residence in the city, and anyone who willingly offered to live in the city, deserved the people's special gratitude.

Then he gave directions as to how the city should be guarded. The gates should not be opened before the sun was well up in the sky, and they should be closed at nightfall. At all times they should be well guarded, and each family should guard the part of the wall which was nearest to its home.

This busy governor during his stay in Jerusalem did many things, but one of the most important was to establish just practices among his people. He, himself, gave them an example of generosity. He served them as governor without salary, and, in many ways, he used his private fortune to help public and private needs. But some of the wealthier Jews had taken advantage of the poverty of their countrymen during drouths, and while they were all working on the walls around the city.

Now the poor people came up to Nehemiah crying that all they possessed had been mortgaged to these capitalists, who had charged them such high interest. Their lands, houses, cattle, and even their children, had been taken from them.

Nehemiah was indignant. He turned on the moneylenders and told them what he thought of their methods, and then commanded them to restore to the people their possessions.

The overbearing Jews were completely humbled. "We will do even as thou sayest," they meekly replied.

The energetic Nehemiah then shook out his lap, and said, "So God shake out every man from his house, and from his labor, that performeth not this promise." "And all the assembly said, Amen, and praised Jehovah."

Nehemiah had promised the Persian king when he left Babylon that he would return after everything was well started in Jerusalem. True to his word he did so. This gave him a chance to explain about Sanballat and Tobiah.

Our last view of him is when he returned to Jerusalem to correct evils which had crept into Jewish government and religion. The place of his death is not known.

* * *

On the banks of the river Ahava in Babylon, little bands of people had been coming in for days from different directions. They were Jews preparing to start for Jerusalem.

It was the Second Return under Ezra. A large company came with him from Babylon, but many belonged to colonies far and near.

Ezra was a man of deep piety. For three days the people fasted and prayed for protection on the dangerous journey ahead of them.

After this special preparation, the caravan was ready to set out. But to understand how it all came about, we must go back to Babylon.

The Persian kings seem to have been easily moved by sad stories about their subject people. The king of Ezra's time was no exception. When he had been told about the bad reports from Jerusalem, and of

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THE FAST BESIDE THE FORD

how the people were too poor to keep up the expenses of temple-service, he was all attention. He was lord of a great empire, and had tens of thousands to do his bidding, but he had interest in the little colony of poor Jews around Jerusalem.

After he had talked the matter over with his counselor, he sent for Ezra who had told him about his countrymen. The king unfolded to him what he meant to do for those Jews.

Ezra was to make a journey to Jerusalem to see how matters stood. The king would send out an edict similar to the one by Cyrus, promising freedom to all Jews who would go with Ezra, and over the colony at Jerusalem, increased by new volunteers, he was to be governor.

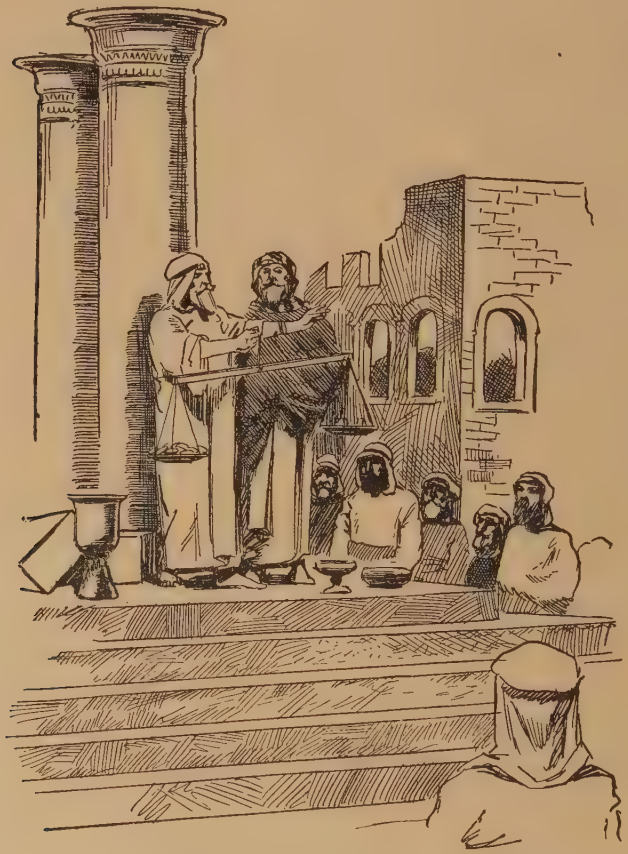
The king fulfilled his generous promise, but he went farther. Ezra was not sent out empty-handed. He was to take with him the silver and the gold which the king and his counselors freely gave to the temple of God. Besides, he was to go through the realm, and receive all the money, and presents of every kind, which the Jews would offer.

This was a splendid promise, but there was more to follow. He was given the right to draw on the king's treasure-house for all his needs in the temple service.

It was a large commission. Word was sent to the keepers of the king's treasure-house west of the Euphrates river, to give Ezra all the assistance needed, and to supply him not only with money, but with provisions.

Ezra was not slow in making use of this fine opportunity to help his countrymen. The king did not have

to urge him to hasten from place to place in order to arouse the people's interest. The result was, that there was a large company ready to start out from the Ahava.



EZRA WEIGHING OUT PLATE AND MONEY.

The caravan had no guard this time, for Ezra says that he "was ashamed to require a band of soldiers and horsemen to help them against the enemy by the way," after he had told the king how God would pro-

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EZRA READING THE LAW.

tect those who trusted Him, and who lived in accordance with His laws.

There was room for uneasiness. The rich treasures which they carried would be a rich booty for any band of robbers roaming the country.

The journey was a trying one. They were more than three months on the way, but at last, worn and weary, they reached Jerusalem.

We can picture the reception they received. It was so seldom that anything unusual happened, that this was enough to excite the whole country. When they learned that Ezra had brought great wealth to be used in temple-service, much interest was aroused.

Three days later, Ezra had the money and treasures which he had brought, weighed out into the hands of trusty Levites. The burnt-offering which followed was a real thanksgiving service.

Ezra remained in Jerusalem many years, and he was a faithful governor. The time and place of his death is not known with certainty. The common tradition is that he died, and was buried on the Tigris, while on his way to Babylon. Travelers are shown his tomb, surrounded by a high wall, not far from the junction of the Tigris and the Euphrates rivers.

QUESTIONS

Where did Nehemiah live?
Why did he give up his fine position as cup-bearer?
What was the condition of Jerusalem?
What was Nehemiah's great work?
Who was Ezra?
In what respect were these men alike?

CHAPTER XLIX

THE NEW NATION

REAT changes had taken place in Jerusalem. The temple again crowned the highest point, the heavy walls with strong towers and gates were built up as in the past, the city itself had risen from the ruins, and an active population lived there.

The days of the first return under Zerubbabel, and the second under Ezra, as well as the lively times of the wall-building under Nehemiah, had all passed into history. A long period of silence followed. But the germ of a new nation was taking deeper root, in spite of discouragements and drawbacks.

The new nation began to rise, and it can be seen at once that it differed from the old. There were many changes, not so much in the size and character of the kingdom, as in the people themselves. It was not that they had lost or gained cities and countries, but that they had grown and developed in heart and mind.

When the Hebrews first appear in history, they were twelve tribes loosely bound together and struggling among themselves as to which should lead. After the exile, tribal lines largely disappeared, and the people became united in spirit. The tribe of Judah

remained the house of David, and there were not enough left of the other tribes to set up any claim.

The great dividing lines became religious ones. The people were divided into classes by the work they did, but more especially by their belief.

Restoration of Ancient Jerusalem.

The all-powerful guide of their thoughts and lives was the law and the prophets. Over these arose fierce arguments, and sometimes bitter quarrels. A class of men arose called the Scribes, whose business it was to know all about the Mosaic laws, and how they had

been applied in the past. They were the lawyers of the time, and their work was to read and write the law as it should be understood.

The name "scribe" occurs long before this time in the Bible, but it was not until the period of the exile that they became numerous and busy. Ezra, of Babylon, was a scribe who was well versed in the law.

The scribes became teachers as well, and they are pictured as sitting on an elevated dais, with their pupils around them on a lower plane. In the New Testament we read about Saul of Tarsus sitting at the feet of the wise Gamaliel, his teacher.

But it was the regard the people had for the law, and the zeal with which they kept it, that broke them up into hostile classes.

The Pharisees were a class noted for their strict observance of the law. In the first place, they had a fanatical reverence for everything connected with Hebrew history. They made it their life-work to obey the law in its minutest details. They proclaimed to all the world, "Look at us, and see how we live up to the law."

The Pharisees started out with good intentions. They were the pious, conscientious kind, and represented the most faithful class. But while many were truly sincere, others made their profession a cloak for dishonest dealings, and Pharisee became another word for hypocrite. The New Testament shows us the Pharisee, who would stand at a street corner saying his long prayers, that he might be seen of men.

Directly opposite in spirit to these, were the Sadducees, so often mentioned in New Testament times.

They did not have the same reverence for old thought and customs. Instead of accepting a thought because it had been handed down from early Hebrew times, the Sadducees were likely to suspect it for that very reason. They became the critics and doubters.

There was a third class, the Essenes, who were simple in their mode of living, and preached a form of self-denial.

The synagogue is referred to many times in the New Testament. It was a place for religious services which came into prominence after the return from captivity. It is likely that the exiles built them in Babylon, where they had no temple. It was not so very long before the principal cities had their own synagogues.

Sabbath services were held in these, and even feast-day exercises. On the Sabbath, some leader would rise, and read a part of the law, or something from the prophecies. Then another would rise, and explain what was not clear. We remember that our Lord both read and explained.

A new institution of this new and more democratic nation was the Sanhedrin. It was the supreme court of the nation, and was composed of seventy or seventy-two members, Scribes, Pharisees, and other leading men. Sometimes, at least, the high priest was the chief justice of this court.

The growing power of the high priest was another change. He was dressed in royal purple, and at times was practically king of the nation as well as head of the church.

Instead of the two little kingdoms of Judah on

the south, and Israel on the north, which we knew before the exile, the whole country after the return, when the people had become established, was in three grand divisions, Judea on the south, Galilee on the north, and Samaria between them.

Every institution, every division, every class was based on religion. It had become the ruling principle of the Jewish nation.

Except for a few years under the Maccabees, the Jews never regained civil liberty. They came back under a foreign monarch, they lived under foreign authority, and were finally driven out by a foreign ruler.

Their rule was not to be of this world and they were on the watch for the great Deliverer promised them.

They had not yet learned to appreciate the high honor that among them should rise the King of the spiritual realm. When their King came, they crucified Him, and yet their great honor remains, that only among this people of long religious training could He come at all.

QUESTIONS

What changes had taken place in Jerusalem?

Is there any difference between the Hebrews before and after the exile?

What class of men arose to interpret the law and the prophets?

How do we describe the Pharisees?

Who were the Sadducees?

What were the ruling principles of the Jewish nation?

CHAPTER L

THE MACCABEES

P AMONG the hills of Judea nestled the little town of Modin, never dreaming of world-wide fame.

One day the little town was thrown into a fever of excitement. Word had been received from the Syrian king, that his own officers would be there, with a royal company, to conduct a great sacrificial feast to the Greek god. The altar was built up, and the sacrifices made ready.

It was a pretty sight, that of Modein at that time of the year. The terraces and gardens were budding for the harvest, and the hillsides and the valleys were covered with flowers. But the people then had no eyes for the beauties of nature.

It was nearing the close of day before the approaching company was seen coming up the hills. Apelles, the leader, was splendid in embroidered garb with gold lace. It was indeed a proud show, and the people made a great noise of admiration, which quite concealed the fact that many of them gave no welcoming shout.

Some of the faithful Jews did not join in the general demonstration. They stood apart in groups, and

their dark looks and emphatic gestures showed that they were not in sympathy with what was taking place. Perhaps the sternest of them wore sackcloth next to their flesh, so sorrowful did they appear.

Among the silent ones was one named Mattathias, of the house of a prince of Israel. Near him were his five loyal sons. These tall, muscular men stood and watched the preparations for heathen sacrifice.

The royal company entered the city by torchlight amid the joyful acclamations of the people. The next morning the great feast would take place. We imagine that Mattathias and his sons, with many other devout Jews slept little that night.

Modein awoke to a scene of festivity. A few gay tents, covered with garlands of leaves and flowers, were scattered among the trees. The excited citizens were astir long before the royal company thought of rising. We can imagine the young Jews walking around trying to assume the careless air of their guests, and young women flitting about exchanging jests in a bantering way. Certainly the staid Jewish fathers and mothers must have looked on with horror, and stepped aside in disdain, as the garland-bearing crowds increased, noisily jostling and elbowing their way in and out, among the bystanders.

The altar to Jupiter Capitolinus had been erected in a small grove. In this service it was customary to sacrifice a white ox, but so great contempt did King Antiochus have for the Jews, that he had ordered swine to be sacrificed.

Apelles, gorgeously clad, and seated in his chariot drawn by white horses, drove up, and addressed Mat-

tathias, as the leading citizen: "Thou, O Mattathias, art a ruler and an honorable and great man in this city, and strengthened with sons and brethren.

"Now, therefore, come thou first and fulfill the king's commandment, as all the heathen have done, yea, and the men of Judah also, such as remain in Jerusalem. So shalt thou and thy house be in the number of the king's friends, and thou and thy children shall be honored with silver and gold and money rewards."

Mattathias looked fearlessly at the officer, his venerable figure and majestic bearing impressing all who saw him. His eagle eyes flashed fire, and in a voice so loud that it reached the farthest limits of the great assembly, he made his reply:

"Be it known, O Apelles, though all the nations that are under the king's dominion obey him, and fall from the religion of their fathers, yet will I and my sons and my brethren walk in the commandments of our fathers."

Raising his hands as if taking a solemn vow, he added:

"God forbid that we should forsake the law and the ordinances! We will not hearken to the king's words to go from our religion, either on the right hand or on the left."

A breathless silence followed. Before the king's commissioner could recover from his astonishment to meet this bold refusal, a Jew who wished to become a leader in the king's eyes, stepped forward to sacrifice the accursed swine flesh to a heathen god!

When Mattathias beheld the loathsome sight, his

anger and grief knew no bounds. He sprang forward, rushed upon the craven Jew, and with one blow felled him on the altar.

Apelles and his men attacked Mattathias, but the five stalwart sons hastened to his aid, and many other faithful Jews did the same. A scene of terror followed. The strong Mattathias smote right and left.

Apelles and his company, and many of the worshipers were slain. In the confusion which followed, the altars were overthrown, and the sacrifices were rolled around in the dust. Calling on all the faithful ones to follow him, Mattathias escaped to the mountains.

This was the signal for dissatisfied Jews all over the land to rally around him, and a vigorous warfare was opened. The king sent his armies to put down the rebellion, but the Jews skillfully avoided them, and made sudden attacks by night on the unprotected villages in and around Judea.

The crusade became a terror to the Jews who had gone over to the king's side. Wherever the forces of Mattathias went, there heathen altars were destroyed, and the worship of God was established.

Mattathias was old, and his fierce struggles shortened his life. He was a man of large faith, and could look beyond the sin and error of his time to the great deliverance in the future. Before his death, which took place the following year, he called his sons to his side, and gave them a sacred commission.

"My sons, be valiant, and show yourselves men," he said to them. "Behold your brother Simon is a man of counsel—he shall be a father unto you."

Later he added, "And Judas who has been mighty

and strong from his youth up, let him fight the battle of the people."

With the words of his departed father ringing in his ears, and with his own faith in God's promises, Judas Maccabees went forth to a series of victories, each worthy of the military genius of Israel's greatest war-heroes.

The king sent his armies against the warring Jews in overwhelming numbers, but Judas so inspired his followers with faith in God, and in their cause, that a glorious victory for the Jews followed every battle. In his rage, Antiochus declared that he would wipe the Jews from the face of the earth, but he was able to do very little because of an empty treasury.

Later, when Lycidas, commanding half of the king's army, appeared against Judas, it seemed impossible that the brave Jews could survive the battle. The enemy felt certain of victory, and it is said that this assurance went so far, that Phoenician slave dealers thronged the Syrian camp ready to buy Jewish captives.

Judas saw how desperate was his case. He set aside a day for prayer and fasting. It was hard for the Jews to have special services without the temple. They knew not how to approach God without the help of the sanctuary. But they did the best they could under the circumstances. They spread out before God the books of the law, and such treasures as had been rescued from the temple, and they cried unto God for help.

Again, it was shown that a handful with God is a majority. Judas with his three thousand followers, put the immense Syrian host to flight, and his army

returned, praising God for this wonderful deliverance.

The next year a larger army was sent out by Antiochus. Judas met them among the vineyards and gardens near Hebron. Here were the tombs of the patriarchs, here Jacob and his sons had journeyed into Egypt, and here David had his first capital.

A little to the north near the Jerusalem road, Judas and his ten thousand defeated Lysias again, and went on to Jerusalem.

The cleansing of the temple was his first care. A new altar of unhewn stone was erected, and on the twenty-fifth day of December, just three years from the day of the desecration of the temple, sacrifices to God were made.

It is recorded of Antiochus, the Syrian king, that his last hours were full of remorse for his brutality in bringing so much distress upon the innocent Jews.

His general, Lysias, however, was in nowise repentant. He was determined to make one supreme effort to overthrow Judas, and with a vast army of soldiers, and cavalry, and elephants trained to warfare, and all kinds of war-engines, he came against Judas.

Not even these brave Jews could stand against such an army. The little band turned aside after a sharp battle, and Lysias' victorious army swept on to Jerusalem. A treaty of peace was hastily made, giving the Jews what they demanded, religious liberty.

The time of peace was brief. When ambitious scheming arose among the Jews themselves, there were no more victories for the army.

The high priest looked with disfavor on the popularity of the Maccabees. He himself wanted to be

king as well as priest. He laid his case before the new Syrian king, Demetrius. He showed him what a rebellious family the Maccabees were, and how necessary it was to do away with Judas and his followers, in order that the kingdom might have peace.

DEATH OF JUDAS MACCABEES.

Division arose among the Jews. Some favored Judas, and other classes took sides with the high priest. Disasters followed, and the fatal battle of Eleasa was at hand.

The men of Judas' army became disheartened, and many, through fear, left him on the eve of the battle. The handful of faithful ones urged him to avoid a battle with the hosts of Syria.

"God forbid that I should do this thing, and flee away before them," he said. "If our time be come let us die manfully for our brethren, and let us not stain our honor."

There is nothing more heroic in the history of warfare, than those eight hundred patriotic Jews standing for religious and civil freedom against the imposing armies of the Syrians. After a brave but hopeless, fight, a few escaped. Judas Maccabees, one of the world's greatest patriots and heroes, was slain, and his brothers, Jonathan and Simon, carried him off the battlefield. When his body was brought home to Modein, and laid in the family sepulcher, faithful Jews everywhere mourned as for a lost cause.

There were yet two sons of Mattathias who were able to lead the remnant of the army, and Jonathan succeeded his brother Judas.

For three years there was continual warfare. That he was able to save his little band from utter defeat and capture speaks well for his skill as the commanding general.

The Syrian general was weary of war. It is possible that the royal treasury was not so full as it might have been. He gave Jonathan a solemn promise that he would do him no more harm, and they made a treaty of peace.

Jonathan was a shrewd general, but he was skillful as well in other ways. He made use of his position

by adroitly forming treaties with those in power, so as to gain influence and position with strong monarchs.

Finally, he fell a prey to a royal schemer's treachery. Jonathan was lured into the city of Ptolemais, his little company was killed, and he was made a prisoner. Then this Syrian traitor, Trypho, who planned to kill his own king as well, prepared to take all Judea.

At this crisis, Simon, the last of the Maccabee brothers, came forward.

"All my brethren are slain for Israel's sake, and I am left alone," he said. "Now, therefore, be it far from me that I should spare my own life in any time of trouble."

The people responded, "Thou shalt be our leader."

At this, he assumed command of the Jewish army, as his brother's successor.

Trypho's plan was to take Jerusalem, but though he tried every way, Simon baffled him at every turn. In one of these proposed expeditions against the City of David, he was stopped by a fall of snow. This exasperated him so much that to work off his spite, he had his prisoner, Jonathan, murdered. The body was buried somewhere east of the Jordan. Later, Simon found the grave, and had his brother's body taken to Modein where his father, mother, and brothers were buried.

Simon had three sons, two of whom, Judas and John, gained a great victory over the Syrians.

Treachery in the family caused the death of Simon. His son-in-law, Ptolemy, who wished to secure his office, had him murdered at a banquet. His sons, Judas

and Mattathias, fell with him, and the escape of John was due to his being absent. Before the murderer's hand could reach him, he had been warned.

The Maccabees were a family of patriots, lofty-minded and unselfish, whose memory the Jews honored by holding their descendants, the Asmonaeans, as the royal line of the nation.

QUESTIONS

Who was Mattathias?

What was the character of this man and his sons?

Tell the story of Mattathias.

How many of his sons became leaders?

The Maccabees came in between the corrupt Greek period and the domineering Roman. Does any other period in Jewish history equal this in patriotism?

CHAPTER LI

THE ROMAN EAGLES IN JERUSALEM

INGS can have no more power than Rome gave Pompey before he set out to take western Asia. He was the hero of the world after he had scattered the large bands of pirates, which had terrorized the sailors and merchantmen of the Mediterranean.

At this time in Judah there were two brothers of the royal family of the Jews who claimed the throne. They were descendants of the Maccabees, and their names were Hyrcanus and Aristobulus.

Hyrcanus was the elder, and therefore the rightful heir, but he was a gentle, peaceable man, who would much rather have lived quietly on his private fortune, than to fight for the throne. If he had been let alone, his brother would have ruled without opposition.

But there was another person, named Antipater, who would not rest until Hyrcanus promised that he would stand for his rights. The reason he wanted Hyrcanus to be king was that he saw how easy it would be to manage such a meek man, and that he, himself, could stand right behind the throne, and really be the ruler.

The younger prince, Aristobulus, had his own share

of energy and ambition, and all that his brother lacked, and he laid his plans so well that he got possession of the capital, Jerusalem. The wily Antipater would have had to work hard to use this brother as he did Hyrcanus.

When Pompey the Great reached Damascus on his victorious march, the two brothers each sent him magnificent presents with a request for aid. The claim Hyrcanus made was that he was the crown-prince, and Aristobulus had nothing to plead, except that he was better fitted for the kingship. This was the entrance of Rome into Jewish affairs.

A third request came. It was from the class of Jews who were called the Pharisees.

They had little faith in either of these princes, and they were tired of royal ambitions and plots.

Besides, they looked with disfavor on this scheming Antipater, who was not a Jew at all, but farther back his ancestors were of the Edomites, the old-time enemies of the Jews. During the time of the exile, these people had pushed up into southern Judah, and had taken possession of land and towns which belonged to the Jews who were then in Babylon.

After the Jews returned, these people were known as the Idumaeans, and they claimed to be citizens of the country with all the rights of Jews. But all this did not make them of the Jewish race, and the Jews disliked to see them grow into power.

If it had not been for Antipater, Hyrcanus would have suited them very well, but as it was, they looked back to their early history when God was their ruler, and their leading man judged the people.

These Pharisees brought in their request to Pompey. "We want no king but God. Our high-priest will rule over our religious life."

Pompey rather liked the idea. That plan would certainly give Rome something to do. No people could live without a ruler, but he was very well content that there should be no Jewish king. To avoid any immediate trouble, this busy man sent them all away with the promise that he would look into the matter when he reached Judea.

Aristobulus held the city of Jerusalem, and so had the best chance with Pompey, but he foolishly threw away his advantage by angering the Roman. After giving a solemn promise that he would abide by the decision as to who should be ruler, he made preparations to give battle, if his claims were set aside.

Aristobulus was too eager and impatient, and he came to see Pompey more than once. At last the Roman ordered him, then and there, to give up the city, and he sent his army to take possession of it.

By some plan or chance, Aristobulus had remained with the Roman, and when the army reached Jerusalem, the gates were shut. It is likely that Aristobulus had sent in his orders to that effect.

When Pompey got this word, his patience was gone. Taking Aristobulus with him, he joined his army outside of Jerusalem.

In the city there was confusion and tumult. The Pharisees were in favor of opening the gates, and trusting to the mercy of Pompey, but the party of Aristobulus opposed it.

While the leaders in the city were going over their

reasons back and forth, and bitter quarrels grew common, the Roman army was encamped outside the walls, and Pompey was demanding that the gates be opened. The city was in a panic of fear, and knew not which plan to favor.

Finally, the Pharisees opened the gates, and the royal party of Aristobulus rushed up the temple mount, and closed the gates of the fortifications around the temple.

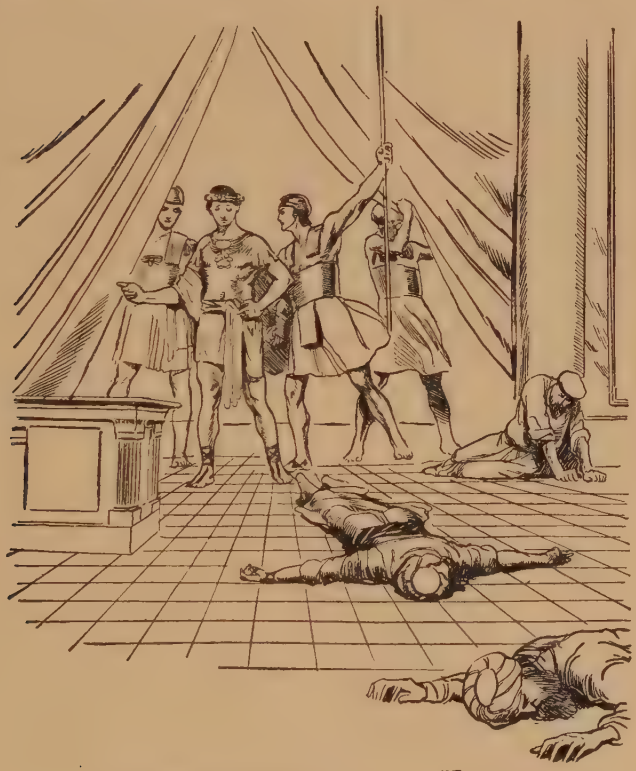
It is hard for us to understand that while the temple was in Jerusalem, it was entirely shut away from the city. It was on a high elevation above the city, surrounded by steep precipices and deep draws, something like canons. Besides these natural protections, ditches had been dug, deep and wide, and a high wall, heavy as masonry could make it, with strong forts, surrounded the temple mount.

In this stronghold, and behind these heavy walls, the opposers planted themselves. The immense bridge which reached from the temple to the city they had already cut down, and they had made themselves ready for a long siege. When the Romans looked up, they saw nothing but frowning walls, and threatening towers, and at their feet yawned chasms which nothing but uninterrupted work could span. It looked like a hopeless task to try to take this stronghold.

The Roman engines could not hurl projectiles from the farther side of the broad trench, and the only way to get them near enough to the wall, was to fill up the trench where the bridge had been broken down. The Jews, from their walls and towers, could easily keep the Romans from such work by hurling great rocks

and other projectiles, and sending showers of arrows down on the workmen.

But a successful way was found by Pompey. The Sabbath was a sacred day to the Jews. In warfare



POMPEY ENTERS HOLY OF HOLIES.

they were allowed to do nothing on this day, except to defend themselves. The Romans took advantage of this Jewish law, and without sending as much as an arrow against the enemy, the whole army spent the Sabbath in filling up the ditch. The Jews inside could do nothing but watch the proceedings, and see how the

Romans were steadily approaching them, so strict was their law in regard to their day of rest.

Pompey then put to use his engines and battering rams brought from Tyre, and immense stones were hurled against the walls and towers. The largest tower was shaken and later fell, and an opening was made through the wall. When the walls gave way to admit the army, the unhappy people stood defenseless before the brutal Roman soldiers. The three months' resistance had tried the patience of Pompey and his followers, and the Jews were made to suffer for it. Many were slain, and Pompey sealed his victory by setting the Roman eagles above the temple gate. This was a painful sight which the people of Jerusalem had long to endure.

The Roman general did not understand how sacred the Jews held their temple. Full of curiosity he entered in, and pushing his way past the horrified Jews who tried to block his entrance, he went on into the Holy of Holies.

It was a humiliation the Jews never forgot. Instead of being grateful that Pompey had only looked on the treasures of the temple, they grieved that an unholy Gentile had entered where only their own priests were allowed to go.

Aristobulus lost the kingdom by trying to oppose Rome. Hyrcanus was made high-priest, and nominal ruler of the people without the title of king. Rome received tribute, and was highest authority.

When Pompey went back to Rome, he passed along the streets of that city in a great triumphal procession. In the long train of captives brought home from many

lands, were Aristobulus and his two sons, and thousands of Jews who had been taken on the temple mount. After this humiliating experience, they were confined in Roman prisons. Afterwards they were set free, and settled in the Jewish colonies found in Rome in the times of the apostles.

QUESTIONS

Who was Pompey?

What two Jewish princes sent him presents and appeals for help?

How did those brothers differ?

What did the Pharisees request?

Had the Jews been given lessons since the days of Samuel?

What became of Aristobulus and his sons?

CHAPTER LII

THE DARK REIGN OF HEROD THE GREAT

ALIANT and brave, young Herod steps out upon the stage of public life like a prince of chivalry. There was nothing in his opening career to indicate that his name would go down into history blackened with crime. At the early age of fifteen, he found Galilee infested with robbers. It was an evil the people had long endured, but there were few who cared to risk their lives by hunting them in their secret hiding places in the wilderness and mountain-passes. But the brave young Herod volunteered to lead out a pursuing company, and he was singularly successful. He tracked them down, killed their captain and strong leaders, and broke up the fierce bands. He became so popular that his splendid deeds were told in song and story, not only in Galilee, but in Judah, Syria, and other neighboring countries.

Herod was the able son of a clever father. Antipater was a master of skill and policy. He was not a Jew, but originally of the Edomites, those old enemies, a part of whom had settled in southern Judah during the captivity. Antipater most skillfully

wrapped himself around the power which promised to lead. The first person he courted was the high priest, Hyrcanus. He made himself so lovable to him that the high priest looked on him as a dear brother. Hyrcanus was supposed to be the chief ruler, but

HEROD WITH ARMED GUARD BEFORE SUPREME COURT.

Antipater saw to it that he, himself, was the real power. When Rome came in, Antipater became so useful to that great power that he was regarded as a very desirable friend, and he was made ruler over

Judah, Galilee, and Samaria. He then had the governorship of Galilee transferred to his young son, Herod, who had already endeared himself to the people.

Herod was not a whit behind his father in ability and policy. He followed carefully in his father's footsteps at the outset, but he was soon able to map out a vigorous course for himself. He started out to please and pacify, and became immensely popular.

The leading Jews were roused to jealousy. Here was a man not of the Jews, lording over their land, and even over their high priest. Hyrcanus was blind, they said, and they began planning to depose Herod. They trumped up a charge against him on the ground that he had killed the robber bands without the consent of the Sanhedrin, the supreme court. Perhaps there were graver charges, but history does not mention them. Herod was accused and called before the Sanhedrin for trial.

The young ruler turned to his father, Antipater, for counsel. That shrewd man advised him to go before the Jews, but in a way that would be both safe and imposing.

The dignified court had assembled and were ready for the culprit. The faces of the members expressed the severity which would be shown to the alien ruler. Promptly the young governor appeared before them. He came as a king of royal rank, dressed in purple, and with a strong bodyguard. To Hyrcanus, the high priest, and head of this supreme court, he presented a letter from Rome, commanding his protection of the young favorite.

The Jews were overawed, and those who were to bring up the charges, were silent. Only one had the courage to rise and denounce them for their cowardice. He declared that this Herod, whom they spared, would not in the future spare them. We shall see how well the future bore him out.

Julius Caesar who had been assisted in his Egyptian campaigns by Antipater, extended his gratitude to the son Herod. When Caesar's friend, Antony, came to the front, he found in Herod a friend. The two men were sufficiently alike to be congenial, and besides, the pleasure-loving Antony found an additional attraction in Herod's liberal payments of money, which were always so acceptable to the extravagant Roman.

Octavius finally succeeded his uncle Julius Caesar. In the changes that took place, there had been an uprising in Palestine, and Herod had been imprisoned. With his usual good luck, he escaped and made his way to Rome. By his friend, Antony, he was presented to Octavius, and was quickly taken into his good graces as well.

These two rulers brought him before the Roman senate, and recommended him for the throne at Jerusalem. The senate quickly elected him to that position, and then Herod was escorted into the capital between the two royal friends, where heathen sacrifices were offered to consecrate him king of Judah! If Herod did not blush with shame, it was because he lost sight of the Jews, and their God, in the triumph of the hour.

After a week of banquets and celebrations in the

imperial city of Rome, Herod departed for Jerusalem loaded with kingly honors, and supported by a Roman guard. He had left as an escaped prisoner, fleeing by obscure ways, hiding and skulking when pursuing parties might be near, but his return was the march of a conqueror.

As soon as he entered his old realm, he began to raise an army. The people were awestruck at the sight of the proud king, and many fell in willingly with such a display of power. His own Galilee was quickly subdued, but when he drew up before Jerusalem, he met with resistance.

He laid siege to the city. A Roman army came to his assistance, and together they turned their destructive forces on the fortification. The Jewish people stubbornly resisted their unwelcome king, and before he could effect an entrance, the rival party had held the throne three years. When the walls finally gave way, the Roman soldiers rushed in to pillage and destroy. Jerusalem seemed doomed to destruction.

This was altogether contrary to Herod's wishes, who needed both city and people. He called to the leaders to stop their soldiers in the wholesale slaughter of inhabitants, and destruction of property. "Would you make me king of an empty desert place?" he cried in despair. To save the city, he had to pay out a large sum of money to the Roman destroyers.

The king secured his throne, and after this the world saw another side of his nature. The Herod of history began to appear. The ruler who might have won his title of "Great" by able deeds, became great chiefly in cruelty and bloodshed.

His first care was to destroy the family of the royal high-priesthood. He had married Mariamne, a beautiful woman who belonged to this line, but that did not stop him. Her brother Aristobulus, as heir to the office of high priest, became an object of suspicion and hatred.

This youth Aristobulus was of unusual beauty. The people wondered at his striking appearance, and heathen admirers said that he looked like the sons of the gods. Herod feared his strong hold on the people's affections, and resolved not to admit him into the office of high-priest. But he was yet under the full power of his beautiful wife, Mariamne, and she pleaded so well for her brother, that the king relented, and Aristobulus was elevated to his inherited rank.

When the young high priest appeared for the first time in a public service, the people were carried away with enthusiasm. This magnificent youth was of their own race, and in the ruling line, and the inspiration of the hour was upon them.

Herod's eyes narrowed in an evil way when he saw their looks of affection and delight. He secured accomplices to do his bidding. On a festive occasion, Aristobulus was persuaded to go in bathing with some young companions and was drowned. It was an accident, they said, and Herod joined the people in their loud lamentations.

Herod's cruelty grew with his crimes. His lovely wife, Mariamne, was accused and put to death as a traitor. As soon as she was gone, Herod was nearly crazed with grief and remorse. But he kept on in his murderous course.

The two sons of Mariamne fell under his suspicions. They were brought to trial, convicted, and strangled to death. This murder of his own sons caused the people to hate, more than ever, their monster-king.

His supreme desire was to make his kingdom strong and powerful, and he succeeded in raising it to a high state of wealth and prosperity. In his saner moments he tried to please the people. His visit to Rome showed him what the rulers there did to become popular, and he set up Roman ways in Jerusalem. He built a theater where pagan music and plays were heard, and in the suburbs of Jerusalem a large amphitheater was erected where gladiators and wild beasts fought, for the entertainment of the people, and all sorts of heathen games were played. These delighted the people of Rome and endeared their rulers to them, and Herod did not understand that the people of the holy city were different. To still further pattern after Rome, he built for himself in Jerusalem, a magnificent palace of the costliest materials, such as graced the banks of the Tiber.

The Jews were hard to pacify. They could not forget that this king was not of their race, and they shuddered at his unnatural crimes. To this serious-minded people, their old simple life remained a background against which these mad revelries and sports were but a mockery.

The king's desire for popularity clung to him to the last. It was not hard to see that the people disliked him, and to win their favor, he undertook great building operations. Surely these would appeal to their national pride. He built up the walls around

Jerusalem and repaired the city. He made new and strong fortifications throughout the land, and strengthened old ones. He restored Samaria which had long lain in ruins. One last and most successful attempt to gain the good-will of the people, was to propose to replace their modest temple with one more like Solomon's.

This last was a master-stroke, but the people doubted his purpose. "He would tear down our temple to destroy our religion," they thought, and only after he had much of the material brought in for the new temple, was he allowed to touch the old one.

Herod's wicked life was drawing to a close, but he was guilty of one more great cruelty. In the very last of this dark reign, the Savior was born, and Herod put out his hand to destroy this promise of Judah.

We are all familiar with the story of the three Wisemen from the east who came to find the child Jesus. When Herod heard of the search, he was troubled. They asked for the king of the Jews, whose star they had seen. Was it possible that one had come to claim the throne of Judah!

With a cunning made perfect by long practice, he became all sympathy and interest in their presence. Where was the child to be born, he asked with solicitude, and he let them depart with instructions to return and tell him where the young king could be found, that he too might go to worship him.

The wise men did find Him, but they did not return to report to Herod that the king of the Jews was lying helpless in a manger at Bethlehem. Instead, they quietly returned to the far east by another way.

Herod was furious when he saw how he had been outwitted. Not being able to designate any particular child, he issued a decree to have all male children under two years of age put to death. It was done, and a great cry of sorrow went up from Bethlehem and its borders. But the child Jesus was safe in Egypt.

Herod's ravings were soon at an end, and death claimed him at last. His reign had been a dark one, but the newly risen Star of the East shone only clearer, as it gave promise of another kingdom, a spiritual one, which includes not only the nation of the Israelites, but all the nations of the earth.

QUESTIONS

How is Herod introduced in history?
How did he come by his power in Galilee?
What can you tell of his father Antipater?
How did Herod come to the throne of Judah?
What change did his character undergo?
What of his building enterprises?
What King and Kingdom were represented by the Star of the East?